

WHITE GARMENTS, GRAY NOTIONS:
ISSUES OF IDENTITY AND MOTIVATION IN REGARD TO THE
CONTEMPORARY BUDDHIST PILGRIM IN JAPAN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER I PILGRIMAGE STUDY IN JAPAN: CONCERNS AND METHODS.....1	
Primary Considerations.....	1
Pilgrimage Study Paradigms Considered.....	8
General Research Considerations.....	18
Pilgrimage Structure and Pilgrim Travel.....	20
CHAPTER II WHITE, BLACK, AND GRAY: PILGRIMS, NON-PILGRIMS, AND ISSUES OF IDENTITY.....26	
Buddhist Pilgrims in Japan:	
How many are out there and who are they?	26
Random Encounters: The Catalysts for Pilgrim Identity.....	29
The Pilgrim Mystique: Archetypes and Curious People.....	31
Strength of Identity.....	39
White Garment Hermeneutics.....	43
Darker Shades of Grey: Non-identity.....	46
Pilgrims by Association, Accidental Pilgrims, Professionals Pilgrims, and Compulsory Pilgrims.....	50
Pilgrim Identity and Religious Identity	53
CHAPTER III SPECIFIC PILGRIM ISSUES..	58
“Self-power”, “Other-power,” and Ascetic Practice.....	58
Pilgrim Play!.....	66
Fear and Desire.....	70
Unending Circles: Ongoing Pilgrim Travel.....	75
CHAPTER IV PILGRIM WILL: MOTIVES AND THEIR EVOLUTION....	81
Motive-holding Pilgrims.....	85
Central Motive-Independent Pilgrims.....	93
The Evolution of Pilgrim Motives.....	96
Figure A: Possible Sequences in the Evolution of Motive.....	98
Pilgrim Voices on Changing Motives.....	98
CONCLUDING REMARKS	102
APPENDIX A.....	105
APPENDIX B.....	109
APPENDIX C.....	111
NOTES.....	114
SOURCES IN ENGLISH.....	120
SOURCES IN JAPANESE.....	123

CHAPTER I

PILGRIMAGE STUDY IN JAPAN: CONCERNS AND METHODS

Primary Considerations

Contemporary Buddhist pilgrimage in Japan challenges the scholar with a number of variables that force us to reevaluate how we investigate pilgrims and pilgrimage. Some of these considerations are present in certain institutional structures. Others pertain to factors found in the individual pilgrim's experience of pilgrimage. Academic methodologies, which prioritize either institutional structures or pilgrim experiences to the exclusion of the other, have and will continue to paint a skewed picture of the overall situation. Up to the present, the tendency has been to preference the institutional side of pilgrimage rather to the exclusion of the experiential dimensions. The result has been approaches that give a lopsided picture and scholarly treatments, which either avoid experiential factors altogether, or worse still, draw conclusions about pilgrim experience based simply on overt institutional structures. My basic argument is that pilgrimage study in the context of Japan can benefit significantly by including certain factors of personal experience. My central research question asks what factors of pilgrimage are fundamentally missed when we concentrate too heavily on institutions.

First, let us briefly introduce what are some rather unique points in the study of Japanese pilgrimage. In terms of institutional structures, we should first consider the general layout of the pilgrimage landscape. As we shall consider in greater detail, pilgrimage takes place mostly along established routes that have specific numbered locations and that are roughly circular. The distances between the numbered locations and the overall length can suggest extremes. Some pilgrimage routes are in excess of

1500 kilometers while others are miniaturized to fit within a single room or within a single temple.

While we commonly consider established pilgrimages to be the result of either extraordinary faith or historical circumstances, religious professionals and specialists routinely manufacture pilgrimages in Japan. In fact, so many pilgrimages were designed in the 1980's and 90's that this period is commonly referred to in Japan as the "pilgrimage boom." The popularity of many new pilgrimage routes attests to the skillful construction of institutional structures. As such, historical significance need not be a trademark of a successful pilgrimage.

Most pilgrimages have developed elaborate support structures in the form of pilgrimage associations. These groups advertise the pilgrimages, disseminate general information about them, coordinate member temples, give practical support for pilgrims, such as providing tea or other offerings, and establish pilgrim leaders, who act as guides and promote orthodoxy in practice and belief. These associations have become the backbone of many pilgrimages.

Most Buddhist pilgrims in Japan record their journey with a seal obtained at pilgrim locations and inscribed on a scroll, in a special book, or on an item of clothing. For many, this tradition would seem to be the most central aspect of pilgrimage. These items are significant enough to be primary motives for the journey itself, and they can even become family heirlooms.

There are many unique factors in Japan that pertain directly to pilgrim experience. Most obviously, pilgrims are employing a huge variety of methods in order to circumnavigate the pilgrimage routes. From walking in straw sandals to hovering

overhead in a helicopter, pilgrim experiences differ hugely as a result of the methods employed to accomplish a pilgrimage. Additionally, pilgrims may use a variety of methods to complete a single pilgrimage route or may employ different means of travel for different routes.

Intertwined with methods of travel, the pilgrims' overall disposition towards pilgrimage can differ hugely. While many are displaying outward devotionism to the central figure of a particular pilgrimage, significant minorities of pilgrims are pilgrimaging as a form of ascetic practice that will provide self-actualization or Buddhist enlightenment. Others seem drawn to pilgrimage, at least in part, for the recreational opportunities. Many start out unsure of their approach, relationship to the central figure, and motives but remain confident that the experience itself will render answers to these questions.

In general, the length of time spent completing pilgrimages in Japan seems significantly longer when compared with other pilgrimages of the world. Rarely a once in a lifetime journey, individuals here often complete their pilgrimages with periodic travel over weeks, months, years, or even decades. Posters advertising the Saigoku Kannon pilgrimage illustrate this fact by writing the phrase “ikutabimo” in hiragana (Saigoku). Based on the Chinese characters assigned to the phrase, it could mean either “also a trip to go on” (行く旅も) or “many, many times” (幾度も). As a result of this continued journey, many factors related to the pilgrim can change significantly.

There is an inherent popularity of temples and locations related to Buddhist pilgrimage in Japan. As a result, we should carefully consider the status of all those who travel there. Should all visitors to pilgrim locations be considered pilgrims? Should all

participants in certain institutional structures related to pilgrimage be considered pilgrims? Perhaps the differentiation between pilgrims and non-pilgrims is much more existential? In regard to these considerations, personal questions of identity can be significant points of methodological consideration.

As we shall consider in detail, the majority of Buddhist pilgrims in Japan appear to have pilgrimage experiences in more than one institutional context. That is to say, most are traveling or have traveled on several pilgrimage routes. If institutional structures can be somewhat variable, then it is prudent to consider those personal factors, which remain constant. For instance, on some pilgrimage routes pilgrims are traditionally referred to as *Ohenro*, while in other institutional contexts they are called *junreisha* or *junpaisha*. However, if an individual is wearing the same garments and performing the same ritual behaviors in both institutional contexts, what does this suggest about these traditional distinctions? In some cases, pilgrim identity may have rather limited associations with institutional structures, while in other cases it is inseparable. In contemporary Japan, we must begin to consider pilgrims in a variety of contexts, because pilgrimage here is becoming rather pan-institutional.

Our approach hopes to incorporate both the institutional and individual considerations related to pilgrimage. While hopefully remedying ills brought on primarily by neglecting the experience of individuals, we must employ a definition of the term that includes both of these aspects. Ian Reader and Paul Swanson have offered an operational definition of pilgrimage considering this context, which serves our purposes well.¹ They state:

In using the term “pilgrimage” we are referring to a process and practice whereby people (pilgrims) make special journeys to or through sacred locations and engage in acts of worship, and to an institution that includes and is composed of all of the various component parts and elements that surround the process (228).

This dual meaning use of the term pilgrimage does, however, require some qualification at times. Most notably, there can be a tendency to conflate the former meaning of an activity and the latter meaning to an institution. Additionally, the latter meaning implies that the sum total of institutional structures is called a “pilgrimage,” while a single institutional structure or even combination of several is not tantamount to a pilgrimage.

Japanese terms for pilgrimage similarly express this dual meaning between a pilgrim’s activities and institutions. Reader and Swanson point out that the term junrei (巡礼), the most widely used term for pilgrimage, has the literal meaning of going around (jun 巡) and worshipping (rei 礼)(232). Over time the meaning grew and they state: “It is now most widely used in referring to specific pilgrimage routes that incorporate a number of pilgrimage sites... (232)(See also Appendix C).” The term junpai (巡拝) similarly means going around and worshipping, but is used less to symbolize specific institutions (233). The term meguri (巡り), to go around, can also be used to reference pilgrim routes like the Seven Gods of Good Fortune (233). The term henro (遍路) literally means circuitous road, but its usage now almost always refers to the 88 temple pilgrim route of Shikoku (and other 88 place routes associated with Kūkai) (233) As mentioned above, henro has also become a referent for pilgrims who travel these routes.

In order to include individual factors of experience in pilgrimage study, we must be able to clearly determine who is a pilgrim. Institution primary models of pilgrimage study, as we shall consider below, have conspicuously omitted this consideration. Pilgrims may at times derive their identity primarily from institutional sources. Other times they may not. We should be able to allow for pilgrims outside of or prior to institutional structures. Some may argue that such “pilgrims” represent a very small number of people. Even so, there is no need to exclude them from consideration. After all, a pilgrimage may have its historical origins with a self-styled religious journey that was without precedent, but in which the individual had a distinct identity. But careful articulation of the term “pilgrim” has other advantages as well. It allows us to distinguish between the random collections of people sometimes present at pilgrimage locations.

For this treatment, we will maintain that pilgrims are individuals who (1) understand themselves to be such, (2) engage in some type of movement or travel (be it an actual distance or a symbolic distance) to a specific destination, and (3) understand certain religious associations with their activities. The religious associations the pilgrim has toward their activities range along a continuum from strict orthodoxy to simple notions of the extra-ordinary. These religious associations include, but are not limited to: regarding their activity as inherently religious, recognizing a degree of sacredness in pilgrim locations or objects of veneration, belief in the possibility of miracles, belief in supernatural protection for themselves during travel, and associations of pilgrimage with preparations for death. It is essential to note that a pilgrim’s understanding of these religious associations, in respect to their activities, is not necessarily equal to belief or

faith. A “crisis of faith,” where doubt clouds a person’s beliefs, may stimulate the desire to pilgrimage as well.

Considering our above definitions of pilgrimage and pilgrims, it would be useful to carefully distinguish pilgrimage from other forms of travel for religious purposes. As suggested above, we should not consider any person who travels to a pilgrim location as a pilgrim on a pilgrimage. In Japan, established pilgrim locations are easily identifiable as such. A considerable number of large, famous temples in Japan are numbered stops of a pilgrim circuit. Since a huge number of people visit these places without any religious observances, we can understand that they are popular simply as tourist attractions. But should all temple visitors who engage in prayers, rituals, and chanting at these locations be considered pilgrims? In regard to our litmus of the self-identification of pilgrims, they would not all be classed as such. Therefore, you could have two women chanting the same sutra in front of the same image, but it is only the woman who considers herself to be a pilgrim that is engaged in the activity of pilgrimage. Furthermore, those whom are rightfully called a pilgrim need not engage in any overtly religious activities at pilgrim locations. Our standard requires only that a pilgrim understand that there are certain religious associations with their self-proclaimed status, not that they partake in any specific religious observances. Frequently, pilgrims begin a journey without any ritual observances only to, in time, adopt them along the way. In Japan, a hurried pilgrim will frequently have only their pilgrim stamp book or scroll printed with the temple’s insignia and will forgo prayer and sutra chanting (See Appendix A for a reprimand of this practice).

Pilgrimage Study Paradigms Considered

It is necessary to carefully consider some established pilgrimage research methodologies in order to understand their strengths and inadequacies when applied to pilgrimage in contemporary Japan. Few modern discussions of pilgrims and pilgrimage take place without reference to Victor Turner, arguably the world's leading scholar on these subjects. Along with his wife Edith, his work on Christian pilgrimage in the seminal work Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture maintains a functionalist approach to pilgrim studies. Turner overtly states that his approach is institutional and he champions the priority of institutional questions. Specifically, he maintains that institutional scholarship should be a preliminary sort of framework or mapping from which individual questions can be asked (vii-xv). A detailed description of the distinction between these two types of scholarship is conspicuously absent in his writings, but Turner states that his understanding stems directly from F.A. Hanson's theories on the subject. By not engaging this fundamental distinction in detail, he leaves himself subject to some interpretation.

Hanson asserts several points as to the how and why of higher order scholarly abstractions, such as institutions and culture. First, these abstractions are not to be considered simply "sum totals" of the constituent individuals in a specific system (1-7). He states that, "Institutional questions as shorthand for individual behavior has potential to degenerate into a reduction of social science into psychology (1)." Culture and institutions may differ in degree but represent the same type of abstraction and are

approached through the same sorts of questions; both are reified and ascribed certain properties (2). While the research data may remain constant, it is the type of questions that determine whether one's methodology is individual or institutional (3). He explains that individual questions relate to motives, intentions, and the reasons people have for doing what they do, while institutional questions are concerned with concepts, forms of organization, and patterns of behavior seen in relation to one another (3-7). Generally speaking, institutional questions are said to focus on cultural phenomena rather than people (9).

It is certainly not difficult to recognize overt institutional structures in pilgrimage. In Japan, the type of central image, the numbers of pilgrim locations, and the established route between these locations, all represent major structures. A basic knowledge of these structures is clearly essential to understand pilgrims and pilgrimage on any level. However, topics such as concepts, forms of organization, and patterns of behavior are more or less inseparable from certain individual questions. For instance, it seems rather difficult to discuss patterns of behavior without recourse to a discussion of the causes of these behaviors. When we delve into the realm of concepts, such as the meaning of a central figure, things can turn much more relative due to individual interpretations. Maintaining this preference, one is unable to incorporate a diversity of interpretations. Perhaps the best one could accomplish might be to simply assert that the majority viewpoint is the institutional meaning.

Turner's applies some of his most central concepts in the study of ritual to the study of pilgrimage. Some of his seminal concepts in the area of pilgrim studies include: the assertion of the inherent freedom present in pilgrimage, identification of pilgrimage

as a “voluntary liminality,” and a description of the sense of communion present among pilgrims, which he refers to as *communitas*.

The freedom of choice that Turner speaks about, while potentially useful for describing some pilgrim’s behavior, itself suggests why the assignment of institutional concepts and meanings is difficult. He tells us that the freedom present in pilgrimage negates what he calls “the obligatoriness of life (“Image” 9).” Historically, we can understand this represented liberation from the burden of serfdom, severe restrictions on travel, the oppression felt by gender, and the strict mandates from religious authorities. But in addition to being a more literal freedom from outside sources of oppression, it was also a freedom of interpretation, a freedom in the practice of religious observances, and freedom from religious orthodoxy. As a result, pilgrims are renowned for their antinomian behavior.

Properly speaking, is this “freedom” an institutional characteristic or a condition present in individuals? If what he is describing is the ability to exercise free will, then we must recognize that we are again approaching questions of individual experience. While this may seem to be a philosophical question, it is a somewhat crucial point in this discussion.

Turner’s own statements propose that this freedom, present in the pilgrim, might indeed suggest a fundamental priority of individual interpretations. He explains that the Christian pilgrim could approach the activity with the understanding that she is worshipping Christ, in union with Christ, or even in imitation of Christ (“Image” 16). These significant differences in approach call into question any ability to assess a universal meaning of a given pilgrimage. Furthermore, the symbols present on the

pilgrim's body, on the pilgrim trail, and at the pilgrim locations are bound to have equally diverse symbolic meaning, as a result of the various interpretations of the principal figure that the pilgrimage is associated with. We shall see that equally diverse interpretations of of Kūkai and Kannon exist in Japan.

In Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture, Turner suggests how the concept of liminality can be applied to pilgrimages. He draws on the ideas of Arnold van Gennep and his assertions that rites of passage are composed of three phases: separation, limen, and aggregation (2). Drawing upon his extensive field research on Ndembu ritual, Turner describes this second phase as one in which a change takes place. Thus, the liminal phase is characterized by both "transition and potentiality," and those undergoing this transition have a temporary loss of their social identity (2-3). However, his treatment of liminality is not confined to these rites of passage. He maintains that liminality is present in all phases of decisive cultural change. The term "liminoid" or "'quasi liminal" applies to phenomenon, such as pilgrimage, which display an element of liminality, but are not liminal in the full sense (35). Turner believes that the study of pilgrimage has been largely neglected do to it's liminal (and marginal) character (1).

Buddhist pilgrimages in Japan seem to both support and call into question the assertion that pilgrimage has a liminal or liminoid character. *Yamabushi*, members of Buddhist/Shinto mountain ascetic cults, engage in strenuous mountain pilgrimages that function rather clearly as a rite of passage. On the other hand, pilgrims in Japan often continue pilgrimage travel for an extended period of time. A single pilgrim journey may include only a fraction of the locations, which compose the entire route. Therefore, some pilgrimages are not completed in a single journey. Turner offers no examples of a

pilgrimage, which has this disjunctive character. Because such pilgrimages may lack the characteristics of a single, temporal, transitional phase, there could be a noticeable effect on pilgrimage being viewed as a liminal phenomenon.²

Turner's concept of *communitas*, or social antistructure, is based on his concept of liminality ("Image" 250).³ *Communitas* is the spontaneous communication and communion that exists between individuals outside of conventional societal structures, and between individuals of definite and determinant identities (250). Turner explains that *communitas* "combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity, and comradeship (250)." He also attempts to demonstrate that *communitas* is a necessary yet transitory function of a society, which allows orderly progression (250). Since conventional bonds and roles are shaken by *communitas*, it may be viewed as dangerous by the protectors of social order (251). To some degree, everyone has had an experience of this state (251). Therefore, Turner believes investigation into this social antistructure is an essential component of social science (251).

Turner carefully demonstrates how *communitas* figures into the origins and continued evolution of pilgrimage systems. This evolution generally progresses from anti-structure, through counterstructure, to structure ("Image" 26). The revival of pilgrimages or the occasional crisis in pilgrimage systems can demonstrate how elements of antistructure can reassert themselves again at any time (26-7). This can include a wholesale restructuring of the symbolic elements of a system, as when Muhammad reformed pre-Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca (28). To a greater or lesser degree, *communitas* is always present in the pilgrimage system (as it is in society).

In Japan, possible elements of *communitas*, such as pilgrim camaraderie and communion, are certainly observable. Whether or not pilgrimage systems have undergone continued crisis and restructuring, as a result of *communitas*, is a question that may require thorough historical investigation. Turner's treatment of *communitas* in the context of pilgrimage evolution contains only cursory examples. The absence of a detailed ethnographic case study of a pilgrimage leaves matters rather theoretical. This omission is duly noted by the next era of pilgrimage scholars.

Responding to Turner, John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow make a declaration in their introduction to the edited volume Contesting the Sacred about the diversity of experience. They state:

Pilgrimage is above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses, for both official co-optation and the non-official recovery of religious meanings, for conflict between orthodoxies, sects, and confessional groups, for drives towards consensus and communitas, and for counter-movements towards separateness and division (2).

With its "new agenda for pilgrimage studies," this approach purposely attempts to uproot both deterministic models of pilgrim studies such as correspondence theories and Turner's model, with the assertion that these have become too theoretical and have lost their empirical basis (2-3). Pilgrimage is understood here to be a heterogeneous phenomenon (2). Eade and Sallnow state:

If one can no longer take for granted the meaning of a pilgrimage for its participants, one can no longer take for granted a uniform definition of the phenomenon of pilgrimage either (3).

In addition to the difficulty of a uniform definition, they feel that the reduction of pilgrimage to a dichotomy of structure and antistructure is over simplistic as well. The myriad views pertaining to the pilgrimage and the pilgrim location are competing with one another among members of the “cultic constituency” as well as those outside of this (presumably those connected to pilgrim locations, such as clergy) (5).

Eade and Sallnow’s theories show considerable promise. Their continued stress on the diversity of experience contained within “pilgrimage” is to be applauded. Their ideas are starting to probe the relative aspects of pilgrimage, which are especially present in Japanese Buddhist pilgrimage. However, whether or not these “competing discourses” represent the most definitive aspect of pilgrimage seems undetermined. After all, some “competing discourses” take place regularly at religious institutions outside of the context of pilgrims and pilgrimage. For instance, in Japan, mainstream temples and shrines are often used by groups dedicated to a Shaman.

Eade and Swallnow conspicuously avoid use of the term “pilgrim.” Instead they prefer terms such as “actors,” “participants,” and “cultic constituency.” As a result, we are left to wonder what characteristics distinguish these agents involved in pilgrimage. As we begin to recognize the need to include the relative experiential dimensions of pilgrimage, we similarly need to develop a consistent understanding of whom these experiences pertain to. Put simply, we need to know who pilgrims are.

This approach to pilgrimage is entirely centered on the pilgrim location as the “realm” or “arena” where the “competing discourse” takes place. In Japan, multiple pilgrim locations can decentralize the entire nature of a pilgrimage. A single pilgrimage temple may or may not reflect a strong continuity with the pilgrimage as a whole. The

nature and structure of pilgrim locations can vary dramatically within a single pilgrimage system. Hence, the “realm” or “arena” for pilgrimage is rather variable.

Considering competing discourses among institutions, we can note that pilgrimages constructed in recent times have brought together Buddhist sects with vastly different doctrinal stances. These differences do not appear to be exacerbated in the context of pilgrimage, as it would be difficult to find any other examples of pan-sectarian cooperation in modern Japan that rival those found in the institutional structures of pilgrimage. Such cooperation produces pilgrimage guidebooks, which contain points of Buddhist faith, and perhaps even pilgrimage faith, palatable to all sects. Even seemingly irreconcilable differences, such as sectarian appeal to esoteric or exoteric doctrines, seem to cause little in the way of controversy or debate.

Amongst pilgrims, or groups of pilgrims, a noticeable harmony exists, even in the face of differing views offered by various institutions and individuals. The pilgrim tour bus is often the “greater vehicle” of multiple, yet amicably co-existent ranges of interpretations and motivations. Few seem concerned about defending their approach or persuading others to adopt their point of view, either through debate or evangelisms.

Let us briefly consider some specific difficulties present when individual factors are neglected in pilgrimage studies in Japan. Research concentrating on the institutional side of pilgrimage tends to seek out overt commonality. In Japan, this has resulted in incredible stress on the role of central images of a temple or pilgrim route. While undeniably important, the type of central image, in and of itself, tells us nothing about the pilgrims. For instance, it is potentially contrived to flatly refer to pilgrims on a Kannon route to be Kannon devotees or that Kannon pilgrimage is simply Kannon devotionism.

Pilgrim behavior can be much more complicated. Temples of a Kannon pilgrimage usually have many other types of images. More often than not, the central image of a pilgrim temple is concealed within a cabinet, thus limiting the personal interaction with it. It is entirely possible that an individual who is principally a devotee of Kōbō-daishi or Kūkai would travel to a Kannon pilgrim temple. One often sees pilgrims on Kannon routes wearing pilgrim shirts that extol praise to Kōbō-daishi, and vice versa. The central images are indeed an institutional characteristic, but they tell us nothing about actions, beliefs, or motives of pilgrims. To determine the relative meaning of central images, one has to painstakingly question individuals. The resulting diversity of interpretations must be preserved in our analysis.

Sometimes we notice value judgments that are entirely divorced from the opinions of pilgrims. This difficulty frequently arises when we start to distinguish between types of pilgrimages. Scholars tell us that some routes are “real” or original pilgrimages, while others are simply “second best.” James H. Foard speaks about pilgrimages that derive their form from other routes to be “deliberate, unabashed, and poor imitations at a local level of a prestigious, nationally known model (232).” In most cases, the form that they are copying is nothing more than the type and number of central images. Hiroshi Tanaka Shimazaki suggests that pilgrims may engage in *utsushi* or “copied” pilgrimage routes of the 88 temple variety as a means to achieve “some” religious merit and to “stimulate the desire to make the *Hon-Shikoku*, ‘Real Shikoku,’ pilgrimage at a later date (7).” These statements are offered without any corresponding ethnographic data to qualify them as accurate. Based on a perceived institutional hierarchy, conclusions are drawn about pilgrims. Do pilgrims make such distinctions?

Why would a pilgrim complete a “secondary” route that is actually longer than the original, if she thought that the religious merit achieved was less? Constructing typologies from pilgrimage institutions can create a higher order abstraction that is even farther away from the pilgrims and what they are doing. People who call themselves pilgrims are coming to these supposedly “second best” locations. Is this not worthy of investigation in and of itself?

Overspecialization of research on one specific pilgrimage may also cause undue stress on institutions. When we engage in comparative research with the plethora of pilgrim circuits throughout Japan, we see that attitudes and behaviors are often as similar as they are unique. For instance, a scholar could maintain that historical significance, folk tales, or miracle cures set a particular route apart. But the history may be unknown to the pilgrim. Folk tales are often remarkably similar, and the curative powers can be associated with many sites. I believe that comparative scholarship within a variety of pilgrimage systems will show considerable similarities among both formal structures and pilgrim behavior.

While I am principally advocating for the inclusion of certain factors of individual experience, just as we have seen the opposite to be true, questions pertaining to individual pilgrims often hinge on institutional factors. Some pilgrims derive their identity, beliefs, and ritual activities directly from institutional structures such as pilgrimage associations, certified guides and official literature. Some pilgrims consciously confine their activities within a single pilgrimage institution, such as the Shikoku 88 temple pilgrimage. The contemporary situation in Japan requires us to account for pilgrim experiences across a continuum, from highly structure individuals who exercise little or no spontaneity in their

pilgrim activities on the one extreme to liminal pilgrims who forgo even the most popular and fundamental institutional structures, such as the collection of temple seals. Our approach must not simply cater to a majority viewpoint, but must allow for these extremes as well.

General Research Considerations

I would like to introduce certain topics that have considerable bearing on both the raw research data and the subsequent conclusions. Hereafter, as individual sources are referenced, I will address specific considerations either within the text or notes.

The focus of this research has been almost entirely contemporary. The research took place sporadically over a 10-month period between October 2001-August 2002, and over 11 months from September 2003 to July 2004. I visited 99 officially designated pilgrim temples of the Shikoku 88 temple pilgrim circuit, the Chugoku-region 33 temple pilgrim circuit, the Saigoku 33 temple route, the Chichibu 34 temple route, the Bandō 33 temple route, the Edo River 33 temple route, and the Shin-Shikoku 88 place route in the greater Hiroshima-city area. In and near these locations, I passively observed hundreds of pilgrims. I roughly estimate that I had about 42 separate conversations with pilgrims aged from 22-85. Regarding gender, around 60% of the conversations took place with female pilgrims and 40% with male pilgrims.

Much of the field research data collected here was obtained from anonymous individuals in rather informal discussions. In roughly half of the discussions referenced here, the other party initiated the dialogue. This is likely due in part to the fact that a conspicuous foreigner is still somewhat unusual at many of the rural temples. When

pilgrims speak to one another, there is often a rather standard pattern of questions, which would pertain to where you are from, how many temples you have visited that day (or are planning to visit), and what experience you have with other pilgrimages. Most of the time, within the natural course of conversation, I stated that I was a graduate researcher of pilgrimage. On a small number of occasions, I approached people directly, and purposefully stated what I was doing and asked if they would be willing to answer some questions. The conversations usually followed a similar pattern. Informants would often repeat my own questions back to me, and I would answer with candor. The responses given by pilgrims, the overall setting, and the course of the conversations were recorded with notes immediately afterward.

In addition to these more conventional questions, I asked questions that were outside the scope of “casual” pilgrim conversation. In relation to pilgrim identity, I asked if the individual believed herself to be pilgrim. Since certain terms for pilgrims are tied directly to an institutional context, I usually asked the question mentioning both primary terms (i.e. Ohenro or jureisha). I also inquired if they had a specific motive or aim in the context of their pilgrimage activities. Sometimes the latter question was addressed with follow up questions about a person’s pilgrimage history.

The means of travel used by each informant was a considerable factor to the length of time of each conversation. Bus touring pilgrims are held on a tight schedule, while walking pilgrims and individuals traveling by car usually have much more time to talk. As a result, the data here may be slightly skewed towards the latter two groups. On at least four occasions, I walked a distance with individuals, which resulted in elapsed conversation times in excess of one hour.

While most informants displayed no reservations about speaking with me, several showed some degree of reluctance. In fact, four individuals refused to speak with me at all. Sometimes this reluctance seemed to pass after a few minutes, other times it was present throughout the conversation. While I cannot say for sure, I believe this reluctance resulted from a number of factors, such as not wishing to speak about personal matters with a stranger or in the presence of a friend or family member. Others may feel a sense of embarrassment based on their knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of pilgrimage. Even though my questions were not pertaining to factual points, it is difficult to make this clear during a brief interaction. Perhaps others are reluctant because they are worried about communicating with a foreigner. Discernable reluctance can have a definite effect on the responses provided by an informant and will be noted when suspected.

Field research undertaken by a foreigner raises several issues. Language is certainly the most significant issue. For this research, strong dialects and regional vocabulary, such as encountered in the Kansai region, were at times challenging. To compensate for difficulties, I usually paraphrased the person's response to ensure my understanding was accurate. Whether a foreign researcher is more or less acceptable to a potential Japanese informant is an interesting, but potentially irresolvable question.⁴ For the most part, I would say that my questions were welcomed. This acceptability seems to be, by and large, a function of individuals as well.

In addition to direct conversations with Buddhist pilgrims in Japan, a number of other primary sources were used. After conversations at or near pilgrimage locations, some pilgrims answered interview questions by electronic mail. Pilgrim guidebooks were also used to provide some insight into certain institutional factors. Previous pilgrim

research, which included questionnaires, provided some basic data and daily news articles described some relatively new aspects of Buddhist pilgrimage in Japan.

Pilgrimage Structure and Pilgrim Travel

As a preliminary point we should discuss the basic structure of Japanese Buddhist pilgrimages. The pilgrimages are usually characterized by circumambulation of a numbered series of sites, which are considered equal in religious value, and are situated over a distance. The pilgrim sites can be Buddhist temples (or even temple complexes) with an attendant priest, or can be simple structures with a particular image. The pilgrim journey is not simply the distance negotiated from one's hometown to a particular temple, but also consists of traversing between numbered pilgrim sites in a rough circle whose circumference can be in excess of 1200 kilometers.

It has been duly noted that the large circumference of some pilgrim routes tends to diminish or entirely destroy the sensation that one is traveling in a circular pattern. Tanaka Hiroshi describes his Shikoku pilgrimage as feeling as though it was a circular process rather than a circular journey (286). Added to this, the fact that few pilgrims complete the journey in a single push, this understanding of *circular process pilgrimage*, rather than simply a journey around what is geographically a rough circle, has considerable credence in a contemporary setting (286). At the topographical level, the pilgrim trail is frequently zigzagged. Often one even backtracks in order to approach the next temple or site in the numbered series.

While Japanese pilgrims may tend to travel in a clockwise direction from pilgrim temple to pilgrim temple, there is no taboo associated with counter-clockwise circumnavigation. In Shikoku, counter-clockwise travel is sometimes considered to be of

greater merit. Pilgrims, who seek to encounter Kōbō-Daishi, frequently travel counter clockwise in order to meet him head on. Practically, it is more difficult to perform this circuit backwards, due to the fact that one forgoes the use of the many signs and markings that guide the pilgrim along the way. Some people maintain that the mountain trails are more strenuous in a counter-clockwise direction. This latter point seems somewhat questionable, since the altitude gained is the same whether one travels backwards or forwards. In a contemporary setting, expediency can override any sense of correctness or incorrectness concerning pilgrim travel.

The length of Japanese Buddhist pilgrimage routes is significant in understanding the mechanics of the journey. On the one hand, it is very common for routes to be more than 1000 kilometers in circumference; on the other hand, miniaturized pilgrimages may be condensed to fit within a single room. In the middle, we have many pilgrim routes that have numbered sites in and around a single city or a small island, such as the 88-site route of Shodōshima in the Seto inland sea, which is approximately 160 kilometers (Reader “Miniaturization” 59). The length of various pilgrim routes factors into the overall difficulty of completing them, especially in regard to cost and length of time necessary.

Pilgrim routes in Japan usually derive their shape and length through state designated boundaries such as regions, prefectures, or cities. This is so pronounced that the rearrangement of prefectural boundaries in the Meiji era caused some pilgrim circuits to virtually fall out of existence⁵. Numbered circuits that are arranged around regional boundaries can exceed 1000 kilometers in length and may be more difficult to negotiate, due to geography and available transportation, than the more prominent routes of Saikoku

and Shikoku. Pilgrim routes that are contained within a single prefecture provide the pilgrim with reasonable travel distances and an opportunity to see a good selection of local temples or sites. Routes that are contained within a city (or its greater metropolitan area) are highly accessible pilgrim adventures.

In order to understand the pilgrim's relationship to the length of the journey, we must recognize that most pilgrims do not travel by foot. While certain routes, especially the 34 temples in Chichibu dedicated to Kannon, and the 88 temple route in Shikoku, are very well suited for pedestrian travel, most are not. Most of the pilgrim circuits, which were constructed in recent years, were not designed for completion by pedestrians. Often, pilgrim maps will suggest pedestrian travel only between sites that are located in close proximity to one another. Where it is an option, it should also be noted that walking is usually the most expensive way to complete a pilgrim circuit. A walking pilgrimage of Shikoku may require six to eight weeks. The cost of lodging for a trip of this length is well beyond the cost of travel by car or pilgrim tour.

Given the fact that the bulk of pilgrims do not complete their journey in one trip, we can see that the actual length of travel can grow exponentially. For example, tour companies regularly engage in pilgrim tours that dispatch from the Hiroshima area to temples of the Saigoku route and to Shikoku. These trips are often single day jaunts that only include three or four pilgrim temples, but the journey itself may require a round trip distance easily in excess of three or four hundred kilometers. At this pace, completion of the pilgrim circuit would require 8-10 days, for the Saikoku route, and up to 30 days for the Shikoku route. Therefore, it is very common for a pilgrim route in excess of 1000 kilometers to actually require more than 5000 kilometers of travel to complete! Other

tours try to avoid this situation by dividing a particular pilgrim circuit up into multi-day sections. The Shikoku pilgrim route is frequently divided in quarters by its four prefectures.

While the most famous and popular Japanese Buddhist pilgrim circuits have a length in excess of 1000 kilometers, shorter length routes and even miniature ones are considered to be legitimate by most pilgrims and pilgrimage promoters. The shortest of Japanese pilgrim circuits are miniatures that one often finds in or near pilgrim temples. These miniatures allow one to perform ritual activities without the prohibitive difficulties such as expense and time that one has with longer routes. These small pilgrim routes mirror the type of larger scale ones to which the associated temple belongs. That is to say, a numbered member temple of a 33 temple Kannon pilgrim route will often have a miniature 33-site route also with Kannon images. The miniature pilgrimages can be a series of images arranged within a single room or can be images placed on trails directly behind, or on a hilltop above, a temple. The corresponding temple name, soil from this temple, and sometimes a picture may be included to conjure up the experience of an actual temple visit.

While certainly legitimate, it seems that these miniatures are largely unpopular. This is evidenced by the fact that many are in a state of disrepair and there are few offerings to the respective images (compared to other images in the temples). Furthermore, I have only observed one individual who was ritually traversing a miniature route.⁶ This unpopularity seems due in large part to poor design. Often, these routes are found on mountaintops or in thick forests. These locations are difficult for elderly or

partially disabled pilgrims who are similarly prevented from attempting larger pilgrim circuits.

By far, the most popular miniature pilgrimages are portable versions that are set up in public buildings, convention centers, or the like. Participants usually stand on soil taken from the original temple site. These events are often sponsored by pilgrimage associations. The mobile miniatures are well advertised in major cities and can represent the Shikoku circuit, the Saikoku circuit, or even less known routes such as the Chugoku Kannon circuit.

We can see that Buddhist pilgrimage in Japan takes place in a wide variety of contexts and over a range of distances. With a basic understanding of these structures and how pilgrims relate to them, we can begin to probe more complicated issues. While certain institutional factors remain constant, we will see how individual factors introduce an entire series of variables. This variable side of pilgrimage is the thrust of this investigation.

CHAPTER II

WHITE, BLACK, AND GREY: PILGRIMS, NONPILGRIMS, AND ISSUES OF IDENTITY

Buddhist Pilgrims in Japan: How many are out there and who are they?

While pilgrim research can benefit greatly from statistical data, current statistical data tends to be limited to a handful of the most popular pilgrim venues. This data can come from several sources including research questionnaires and pilgrimage associations. Outside of the popular circuits, statistical data becomes scarce. Concerning the more obscure routes, pilgrim tour companies offer some statistical material.

Sociologists from Waseda University's Department of Road Studies have spent considerable time and energy collecting research data at contemporary pilgrim locations in Shikoku and Chichibu. This data represents perhaps the most concentrated effort to date which attempts to gain a larger picture of Buddhist pilgrims in Japan. However, within the parameters of this study, we will use it with some qualification. Waseda University researchers were less concerned with the application of a stricter definition of pilgrims.⁷ As a result, some respondents to their questionnaires may not be pilgrims in our sense of the term. Conversely, some individuals who we might rightly consider pilgrims, due to their association with the identity, may have been excluded from consideration. Using Japanese language, the questionnaire may not reflect any

participation on the part of foreigners. Used as a guideline, however, this data is extremely valuable.

Throughout Japan, in a given year or season, how many pilgrims are there? From what we know already, we can see that pilgrim behavior itself makes even this seemingly simple question complex. A pilgrim can complete a circuit on a single journey or may take years to do so. To muddy things further, I have met many pilgrims who were involved in their second or third circumnavigation of a particular pilgrim circuit within a year's time. Most pilgrims obtain a temple seal and signature at each location. Even the seemingly quantifiable number of pilgrim seals given out cannot be used with much accuracy to gauge the number of pilgrims. As difficult as these numbers are for a single route, the totals, from the 100 or so odd pilgrim routes throughout Japan, are even more difficult. Eiki Hoshino, while recognizing the lack of conclusive data, suggests that the Shikoku route alone may see more than one million pilgrims in a year (*Shikoku Henro* 354). Perhaps representative of more regional routes, the Chugoku Kannon Pilgrimage Association estimates about 8,000 pilgrims per year (*Miyahara*). Hopefully it will suffice to say that the number of pilgrims is significant and may well be in excess of several million annually.

On the important issue of gender, the data suggests equal numbers of men and women. The Shikoku data shows 48.4% of the pilgrims being men and 50.2% being women (*Shikoku Henro* 11-12). The Chichibu data has 45.6% male and 47.3% female respondents (with 7.1% not indicating) (*Junrei no Michi* 208). The Shikoku numbers are explained in part by data from responses to another question which suggests that 25% of the pilgrims are traveling with their husband or wife (*Shikoku Henro* 2-3). Rough

observation in the context of other pilgrim circuits seems to suggest the same relatively equal number of men and women. This seems to indicate that the pilgrim identity is remarkably non-gender specific.

The Waseda University questionnaires also give us a look at the relative ages of the pilgrims. In Shikoku, more than 56% of the respondents were between the ages of 60-79 (*Shikoku Henro* 12). People in their 60s represent the single largest contingent at 36.3%. 1.8% of these pilgrims were 80 years old and above. Below sixty, participation drops in direct relationship to age with pilgrims in their 50's representing 16.2%, in their 40s representing 9.6%, in their 30s representing 4.8%, in their 20's representing 3.4%, and around .3% from age 10-20 years (12).

In Chichibu, age groups ranked from highest to lowest numbers were: 50-59 years (27.4%), 40-49 years (21.4%), 60-69 years (20.6%), 20-29 years (7.3%), 30-39 years (5.8%), 70-79 years (5.6%), 10-19 years (2.4%), and 80 years and above (1.3%) with 8.1% not responding (*Junrei no Michi* 208). The participants here showed a significant tendency to be younger than their Shikoku counterparts.⁸

In Chichibu there seemed to be an obvious tendency for people living locally to participate. The top three groups of respondents were from Saitama (which includes Chichibu) (37%), Tokyo (28%), and Kanagawa (5.6%) prefectures (*Junrei no Michi* 209). The Shikoku data used more general divisions. The top four groups of respondents were from Chūbu (29.4%), Kinki (18.8%), Kantō (17.9%), and Shikoku (15.3 %)(*Shikoku Henro* 12).

The top four occupational categories represented by those who answered the questionnaires were the same for both the Shikoku and Chichibu data, but the breakdown

of each was different. In Shikoku, 35.4% were unemployed, 19.3% were housewives, 16.8% were businessmen, and 12.5% were self-employed (*Shikoku Henro* 12). In Chichibu, 35.1% were businessmen, 20.8% were housewives, 10.3% were self employed, and 9.6% were unemployed (16.5% unanswered) (*Junrei no Michi* 208). The unemployed individuals would seem to include both those who are jobless and those who are retired. Also, “housewives” seems to include women both above and below the usual age of retirement

Used with some reservations, the above figures give us at least a general idea of pilgrim makeup. It seems to show a fair cross-section of individuals who are past middle age. Pilgrim route considerations might account for some data. For instance, the Chichibu route is in close proximity to Tokyo making it more accessible to businessmen on weekends, while the Shikoku route’s length and relative distance may lend itself better to retirees.

This data is only a rudimentary starting point. As we shall see, significance is not always a function of sameness or majorities. Anomalous pilgrims and minority viewpoints can have a huge impact on other individuals. In order to probe more deeply, we shall first consider a number of aspects of the pilgrim identity itself.

Random Encounters: The Catalysts for Pilgrimage and Pilgrim Identity.

On a sunny Sunday afternoon in March, a solitary middle aged man enters the gates of Mitaki-dera, a temple just outside of Hiroshima city and which is designated temple number 13 on the Chugoku 33 Kannon pilgrim circuit (Anonymous 14-4-02). This Shingon Buddhist temple is a local favorite owing to several particularly historic

Buddhist images, hundreds of sandstone carved images which fill the temple grounds, and, as its name implies, three beautiful (though now quite artificial) waterfalls. The man is not simply a casual temple visitor. He has come there for religious observances. In one hand he clutches a large, single strand rosary, and when he reaches the main hall, he produces a sutra chant book from his backpack. The main hall at Mitaki-dera is very accessible for visitors⁹. The man enters, burns incense, strikes a bell, and chants a short sutra. On his way out of the main hall, he pauses when he notices a poster advertising the Chugoku Kannon pilgrim route. He studies this carefully and then notices an adjacent table with the pilgrimage association's newsletter (curiously called "Kannon Love Letters"). After reviewing this, he moves to the temple office where he asks a number of questions pertaining to the route, what the pilgrim does at each temple, and what accessories are needed. The attendant patiently answers all of his questions and with the help of a picture-filled guidebook, assures the man that it is a worthwhile journey. Convinced of this, the man purchases the guidebook, a *nōkyō* (or pilgrim stamp book), in which his first temple seal and signature is inscribed by the attendant, and a white pilgrim shirt which says "all praise to Kannon Bodhisattva" on the back. After observing all of this, I had a short conversation with the man in which he confirmed his intentions to become a pilgrim. In a brief 15 minutes, the man has begun to shift his identity of a simple temple visitor to that of a pilgrim embarking on a journey of at least 1300 kilometers.

Pilgrim journeys may often begin by bumping into a pilgrim, a book on pilgrimage, or a specific pilgrim memento. By simply becoming aware of these people, places, and activities, interest can be awakened. As in the above example, many pilgrims

may notice that the temple they are visiting is a numbered stop on a pilgrim route (or routes). Many other situations are also possible.

Wide varieties of media can pique interest for the would-be pilgrim. Pilgrimage tour books often occupy large sections of mainstream bookstores. Some of the largest bookstores in Tokyo contain dozens of books about pilgrimage, most of which are temple-by-temple guides containing maps, pictures, and information on bed and board. Pilgrimage associations actively promote their temples through guidebooks, web pages, and newsletters. Some pilgrims have even noted that characters in television shows and movies that became pilgrims initially interested them.

At temple 15 in Kyoto, of the famous 33 temple Saikoku pilgrimage route, a couple in their 70's from Nagoka-city, in the greater Kyoto area, detail how they became interested in pilgrimage (Anonymous 15-3-04).¹⁰ Their neighbor's mother had recently passed away and they went to their home for the funeral. While visiting, the wife noticed a hanging pilgrim scroll that was displayed with the deceased woman. She inquired about it and received an explanation and thus began their interest. Since her husband is the third son of his family, they felt they had little in the way of family memorabilia to pass on to their children, so they believe that this would be a great heirloom.

Such a random encounter as this one can launch a long term or even life-long pilgrim career. This situation contains an element of chance, curiosity, and need. But as we know, chance and curiosity are often what sets things in motion.

The Pilgrim Mystique: Archetypes and Curious People

The identity and mystique of the pilgrim has a very discernable yet largely underrated effect as a catalyst for one to take up the pilgrim identity. The desire to associate oneself with an identity, over and above even the activities of that identity, is very observable in a wide range of examples. From Hell's Angels to Boy Scouts, this issue can be a critical primary consideration. A friend once told me that his illustrious rock-climbing career began when he saw a man with a rope and a rack of hardware on a bus in Yosemite. Similarly, seeing pilgrims moving through a landscape or hearing the tales of a great wondering religious sage can have a very contagious effect on some.

Mamoru Murakami, the author of an unusually pilgrim centered book called *The Pilgrimage Scenery* (遍路の風景), gives an elaborate description of how the image of the pilgrim itself fueled a lifelong desire to become one (44). The author begins with the assertion that “in regard to the Shikoku pilgrims, their intimacy is profound (44).” Being born and raised in Shikoku, encountering the Ohenro-san was an ordinary, everyday occurrence. It was only after he left Shikoku that he realized how unusual such an experience was. While living for thirty years in Tokyo, his childhood memory of such encounters remained strong. As the years passed, there was eventually a submission to this desire to become a pilgrim. In his book, he discusses a scene that centers on the pilgrim. He writes:

While I was living in Shikoku, I saw a lot of pilgrims. But since I have been living in Tokyo onwards of 30 years without a homecoming, I have not encounter any pilgrims. When I remember, it is a sentimental scene. When I attend class reunions and such in Tokyo, the topic often shifts to a longing for this scene from the home-country. More especially, it is a scene in which there is a pilgrim,

which I seem to commonly consider. With the blooming rape blossoms and the sound of the pilgrim's bell¹¹, I can imagine this image, which is the white garment-wearing pilgrim. Being raised where I could closely see the pilgrims, I can immediately remember. But this memory is not a specific person. As it were, it is as the figure of a faceless person¹². This image of the pilgrim is a sentimental focus within the overall scene, and the memory gives me pleasure. Maybe my giving into that which "comes due to age" amuses the others. If it has come to this, given an opportunity, I will be a pilgrim within this scene and I want to say, "Sometimes, this scene is [a vision] of myself." I want to discover myself not from outside this scene but from within this scene. How can I explain this well? I can't successfully express this but, speaking frankly, for me, the pilgrimage is like 'the original scene (44).'¹³

This description conspicuously lacks any saints, deities, temples, or even specific locations. The author is provoked by the image of a pilgrim. In his description, pilgrims moving through a landscape exemplify pilgrimage. This example shows that interest in pilgrimage is not necessarily a function of institutional characteristics but can center on very human elements.

Many times the idyllic notions of becoming a pilgrim collide with harsh institutional realities. An anonymous person in Chichibu writes:

Really, I wanted to become a 'pilgrim-roller'¹⁴. I thought Chichibu would be easy. Why do they charge around ¥300 for the nōkyō [signature]? It kind of leaves a bad feeling. They should give it away for free. If this is impossible, then I think they should include the cost with the nōkyō (Junrei no Michi 210).¹⁵

More specifically speaking, what is so attractive about the pilgrim identity that it becomes a catalyst in and of itself? Few figures in Japanese history or folklore rival the pilgrim archetypes for strength of character and mystic. These individuals are at an extreme end of the spectrum of liminality. Through these archetypes, as seen represented in figures such as Kūkai, mountain ascetics, and wandering holy men,¹⁶ the pilgrim in Japan is understood to be an austere, piously-independent figure who stands outside of the bounds of institutions, is endowed with supernatural powers, and who is a figure to be both revered as well as feared. This image of the original pilgrim suggests that he¹⁷ would have no use for pilgrim associations, temple priests, or any other institutional formality. He has a direct channel to the divine and his strength derives as much from the natural landscape as the pilgrim locations. The archetypal pilgrim has abandoned the stereotypical qualities of a good Japanese person: dedication to the group and family, a profound respect for top-down hierarchical systems, and a stringent work ethic. In another context, he would be considered a rebel, a reprobate, or even a common vagrant. But in this landscape, he is the quintessential holy man.¹⁸

The image of the mountain ascetic as the original pilgrim takes on a general caricature, or can be represented by very specific individuals. Ennogyōja (sometimes Ennoozunu) was a famous mountain ascetic associated with the Chichibu pilgrim circuit and other locations. Shugyō-daishi¹⁹ is a particular characterization of Kūkai that shows him dressed for mountain asceticism. Japanese pilgrimage is a wondering affair precisely because its archetypal founders were wandering people. Before becoming a pilgrim, a

person may read or hear about such archetypal pilgrims and while on the pilgrim trail they will encounter images of them, and see places associated with them.

In Shikoku thousands of Shugyō-daishi statues dot the countryside in front yards, gardens, and fields. A stout walking staff, a blanket, and a sledge hat characterize this image. This pilgrim archetype cast in metal, stone, and concrete seems almost ever-present on the island. While Shingon Buddhism is filled with complex mandalas, secret incantations, and elaborate rituals, the Shugyō-daishi is a powerful, yet plain figure, who is ready to sleep in a cave or under a bridge.

Pilgrim mystique is not limited to these remarkable self-reliant archetypes from the past. As seen in the example above, it can be reflected in contemporary individuals that one could encounter almost anywhere. These random encounters can have a profound effect on the potential pilgrim.

For me, one particular example demonstrates the allure and curiosity of the pilgrim mystique in a contemporary pilgrim. On a dark and cold December morning in 2001 I was descending from Yokomineji, which is temple number 60 of the Shikoku 88 temples. This temple is considered to be the crux temple of this route due to its relatively high altitude and remote mountain location. In fact, its approach is so arduous that an auxiliary temple was selected at the foot of the mountain as an alternate for those who simply could not make the climb. By mid-morning, a snowstorm had descended upon the mountain. With 2-3 centimeters of snow falling per hour, the remote and winding pilgrim trail became very obscure and visibility dropped to roughly 30 meters. Alone but well provisioned, I thought that the situation was probably about as extreme as the pilgrim trail has to offer. Therefore, I was somewhat dumbstruck when halfway through

my descent I nearly collided with another solitary pilgrim who was headed uphill towards the temple. It was a female pilgrim in her mid-fifties (Anonymous 21-12-01). She was lightly provisioned, carrying a pilgrim's staff and wearing pilgrim clothes. With only polite salutations, she quickly moved passed me and was lost in the blur of white. Much later that afternoon, I saw her again at the local train station and was able to speak with her at greater length.²⁰ She saw no other pilgrims besides me during the more than six hours she spent on the mountainous pilgrim trail. My mind was aghast at her potentially dangerous accomplishment, but she brushed it off as nothing special and said she had traveled the whole way up to now by herself. Then in passing, she referenced the pilgrim refrain that was printed on the back of her shirt, "dōgyo ni nin" (同行二人) or "we two traveling together." This is a reference that points to the belief that one is traveling together with Kūkai. This phrase usually alludes to a degree of divine protection afforded by Kūkai for the pilgrim²¹.

I was considerably awestruck by this seemingly average, middle-aged woman, whom I might have passed up in a market without a second thought. In this context, she indeed conveyed a certain mystique. Furthermore, in the course of her continued journey, which was spread over years and traversed thousands of kilometers, she must have similarly impressed many others along the way. While the pilgrim archetypes are epically inspiring, the effect of such a woman may be very personal. I think that the effect of this inter-personal catalyst should not be overlooked, having witnessed a number of similar examples of pilgrims interacting with very curious non-pilgrims.

To be sure, few contemporary pilgrims may be the living embodiment of the mountain ascetic. However, some may be viewed by both outsiders and other pilgrims as

being closer to this archetypal pilgrim than others. As we shall see below, walking is regarded by most to be a basic ascetic practice of these original pilgrims. In contemporary times, bus-driven pilgrims, structured by various organizations, represent perhaps the antithesis of the wandering mountain ascetic. But even for these individuals, the mystique of the liminal, archetypal pilgrim identity is not lost. A scene that is frequently observable is the encounter of a bus-driven pilgrim with a backpack-toting walking pilgrim. Not only are the former full of questions for the latter, they usually display a sort of veneration. Bus pilgrims also frequently give alms to walking pilgrims and heartily wish them safe travels. Often while doing so, they may say, "Next time we will try and walk," "I would walk too, if I could," or even, "I walked the first time, 30 years ago..." For some, the walking pilgrim may seem much closer to the ascetic ideal. This reverence displayed from one pilgrim to another may have some origins in the pilgrim mystique and the archetypal pilgrim.

This reverence, or the perceived hierarchy it may imply, is of great importance theoretically. It suggests that Turner's interpretive notions of liminality and *communitas* are not exclusively bound up in a particular pilgrimage institution. As we have discussed, *communitas* is the spontaneous communication and communion between individuals of definite and determinant identities (250). However, if you have two people who call themselves pilgrims, and one displays a high degree of reverence to the other, the "homogeneity and comradeship" is lost to a great extent.²² The perceived inequality inhibits *communitas*. We can have both *communitas* and non-*communitas* between individuals, who share basically the same identity, within the same institutional framework. Additionally, the attractive pilgrim mystique, which is exemplified by the

mountain ascetic, is one of a person who is for the most part, without peers. Practically speaking, at the individual level we can have a number of relationships between pilgrims in the same system regarding *communitas* and identity: pilgrims who revere other pilgrims because of their more ascetic approach, pilgrims who share both an identity and a similar means of travel i.e., bus pilgrims with bus pilgrims, walking pilgrims with walking pilgrims, and pilgrims whose actions take place at an extreme which affords few if any equals to commune with. In modern day Japan, I have encountered several examples of this last group including a pilgrim who was begging to sustain himself, one who ran a pilgrim circuit, and several who travel by helicopter.

Curiosity about the pilgrim has been almost entirely missed by those who professionally market pilgrimage routes. The guidebooks and descriptions for the most part remain very temple and image centered. Some guidebooks, which are hundreds of pages long and filled with hundreds of pictures, have taken great pains to avoid any pictures, which include people.

Romantic affection for the pilgrim can be very strong, especially in places like Shikoku or Chichibu, where seeing pilgrims is almost a daily occurrence. Traditions such as *Osettai*, or small offerings given to pilgrims in Shikoku, represent interpersonal episodes that can easily lead to pilgrim aspirations on the part of the almsgiver²³. It should be no surprise then that other studies have shown that those who live near pilgrim locations are much more likely to become pilgrims.

Perhaps it seems that we have made too much of this point that a myriad of variables, be they media or people, can lead to the desire to become a pilgrim or begin a pilgrim route. However, the real significance lies in the potential randomness of these

factors. Traditional scholarship would suggest that a person, moved by strong faith in a particular Buddhist deity or saint, takes up the yoke of pilgrimage. The contemporary pilgrim voices, on the other hand, suggest that a great deal of happenstance, coincidence, and inexplicable curiosity has led them to pilgrimage and to call themselves pilgrims. This is not to deny pilgrims often have discernable motives for their journeys (which we shall talk about at length later), but that the catalyst, which starts everything, is most often very random. Frequently, the interest in pilgrimage comes first and the justification follows. As seen in the above example, the chance encounter with a pilgrim scroll at a funeral provided the catalytic interest, while the desire to create a family heirloom provided the motivation for the journey.

Strength of Identity

At times, the foggy precincts of Wakayama prefecture's Mt. Koya reverberate with the sites and sounds of pilgrims. The majestic mountain enjoys a demarcated existence, which only a portion of pilgrim sites in Japan enjoy. Purist may argue that this "sacred space" has been steadily eroding with the addition of cable cars, modern roads, a bus system, and tourist shops. These changes notwithstanding, the mountain still beckons the faithful like few other locations in Japan.

For tens of thousands of pilgrims, Mt. Koya has been both physically and metaphorically the beginning and/or end of the pilgrim trial. While pilgrims following many different routes may choose to include a stop at Mt. Koya, the vast majority of pilgrims who go there are associated with the 88 temple circuit on Shikoku. Both pilgrims and professionals associated with pilgrims seem to have various opinions on

whether Mt. Kōya should be visited prior to going to Shikoku, after completing the circuit on Shikoku, or both before and after. As a result, Mt. Kōya is a terrific location where one can view seasoned veterans and green, novice pilgrims side by side in the same coniferous landscape.

While a pilgrim may stop at two or three important locations on Mt. Kōya, the climax of the journey always seems to be a visit to the mausoleum of Kūkai located at a temple called Okunoin. The approach to Okunoin is incredibly dramatic at almost any time of day or in any weather condition. Even the most stoic of individuals is inclined to pause and reflect. One traverses more than a kilometer through an extensive moss covered cemetery filled with tombs, headstones, stone and wood tōba²⁴, Buddhist images, and old growth trees, many of which are more than two meters in diameter. The graves contain the remains of a huge cross section of individuals of importance in Japanese history. Royalty, feudal lords, samurai, actors, monks, and business moguls are interned here.

Through the middle of this enchanting scene struts a male pilgrim from Saitama prefecture (Anonymous #1 8-5-03). While he is not oblivious to the dramatic scene around him, he is not overwhelmed by it either. A seemingly virile man in his sixties, he carries with him only the most practical pilgrim accrements: a white pilgrim shoulder bag in which he carries his pilgrim stamp book, a plastic tube which holds hundreds of sticks of incense, a purple sash (wagesa) over both shoulders, and a white hat. He walks directly to the ash filled incense pot in front of the temple and, with an air of an established ritual, makes an offering.

The man does not hesitate to make conversation when I greet him, and I soon find out that he is finishing a three-month tour by car of the 88 temples of Shikoku.²⁵ He explains with a great deal of pride and satisfaction that his pilgrimage began and is now ending here at Okunoin. When I ask him if he considers himself a pilgrim, he chuckles as if to say “of course” and responds affirmatively. His pilgrim identity is strong and the question to him seems somewhat ridiculous. He does not, however, seem incredibly interested in the prospect of a follow up pilgrim journey. Instead, he is reveling in his sense of completion. He strolls off towards Kūkai’s tomb while dropping off his pilgrim stamp book at the appropriate desk for an official seal, making several more offerings of incense on the way.

While rounding the corner of Okunoin, our confident veteran pilgrim from Saitama passes a visibly nervous pilgrim, who is returning from the mausoleum (Anonymous #2 8-5-03). This man, who appears to be in his mid-forties, wears his bright, new, pilgrim clothes as a boy at a funeral unaccustomed to wearing a suit and tie. He is fully equipped (if not burdened) with many pilgrim items including a shirt, pants, a hat, and a shoulder bag from which hangs a bell that jingles when he makes the slightest movement. This is the third temple on Mt. Kōya where I have observed this same man in one afternoon. He moves about not knowing quite where to go or what to do. As a result, he frequently stops and asks temple priests and staff for help. At times his pious actions in front of Buddhist images seem as stiff and overzealous as they are random. He struggles to find his voice and pace while reciting the Heart Sutra. While this man is heavily endowed with the outward signs of a pilgrim, he is apprehensive to talk about being a pilgrim.²⁶

In this example, experience seems to be the most important factor in the strength of identity of the two pilgrims. The relationship of experience to identity may be one strong reason for some to reject the prerequisite of pilgrim self-identity in defining pilgrims. The objection states that some people may not consider themselves pilgrims until the journey is well underway or even completed. This research would suggest that this is true for a number of individuals. Some understand themselves to be pilgrims from the moment they leave their homes, some adopt the identity mid-way, even after years of journeys to pilgrim locations, some will consider themselves pilgrims at, or near completion of a pilgrim circuit, and some will stand continuously near pilgrims but will remain fundamentally different with no sense of pilgrim identity or the related religious associations.

Identity, experience, and time are especially important considerations for pilgrims in Japan, because their pilgrimages are rarely single journeys. Over time, the identity becomes more comfortable, they meet others pilgrims who reinforce the identity, they can become more confident and structured in the things they do, and are often more clear about their reasons for doing it.

A range of institutional structures also significantly reinforce this identity as well. The frequent gift of pilgrim alms on the Shikoku route is a reminder that the pilgrim is somehow different. Posters distributed by pilgrimage associations tend to show stylized pilgrims. Encountering these advertisements in every pilgrimage temple, one might begin to recognize the differentiated status they are depicting. Special services extended to the pilgrim at temples, such as complementary tea, are designed to support people of a

very specific identity. The increasing number of temple seals obtained by the individual is written proof of their experiences and efforts.

In established pilgrimage regions, such as Shikoku or Chichibu, the local population will often greet pilgrims differently. A pilgrim in these places is likely to be welcomed with the statement “gokurōsama desu” (ご苦労さまです), or roughly “thank you for your efforts,” rather than the standard “good morning” or “good day. This outside reinforcement by institutions and other individuals may be significant for the cultivation of pilgrim identity.

From a research perspective, the interplay of identity, experience, and time for the pilgrim is discernable in nearly every conversation. While there are no absolutes, in general, pilgrims who are most willing to talk about themselves and what they are doing are, not surprisingly, those who have a strong sense of identity and considerable experience over time.

If we return to the above seen, we see these two pilgrims stand among a smattering of pilgrims and non-pilgrims alike. On this afternoon, the environs of Mt. Kōya echo with the voices of pilgrims, non-pilgrim faithful, tourists, priests, and professionals. Interpersonal exchanges that take place in pilgrimage temples both reinforce the pilgrim identity and distinguish it.

White Garment Hermeneutics

Tokyo in 2004 is awash with both crosses and Buddhist rosaries. A foreigner might easily think that Christianity has made incredible inroads in the great metropolis, judging from the fact that seemingly every other young person is wearing a cross around

their neck. But if one looks closely, perhaps in more cases than not, the cross wearer may also be sporting a Buddhist rosary on his or her left arm. Rather than a sign of a “New Ageism,” these religious accessories seem to be more of a fad without the implications of deep meaning for the owner. We should, therefore, exercise some caution when considering outward signs and religious identity.

While not currently mainstream fashion, outward signs traditionally associated with pilgrims can be seen at nearly all Buddhist pilgrim locations throughout Japan. At the same time, there are many people who call themselves pilgrims who display no overt signs of their status. Many pilgrims say that they wear pilgrim clothes in some places but not in others. To be sure, outward signs of identity are subject to interpretation. Some people compromise and wear unofficial garments that are white in color, i.e. jogging suits, hats, and jackets. The recently available official pilgrim undergarments would suggest that one could be a pilgrim underneath, while maintaining a conventional outward appearance. Since this represents another area subject to freedom of interpretation, it is not unusual to see a pilgrim clad head to toe in white accoutrements standing next to a pilgrim with no identifiable externals whatsoever.

The questionnaires distributed by Waseda University researchers in Chichibu asked specific questions about pilgrim dress. Considering their opinions regarding full pilgrim dress, 14.1% said it was greatly desirable, 23.6% said it was desirable, 57.2% said it was not especially good, and 5.1% declined to answer (*Junrei no Michi* 207). Referring to a illustrated diagram, participants listed what accoutrements they used: 12.6% wore a wagesa, or sash around the neck, 11.3% wore a hakui, or full length

pilgrim coat, 9.8% wore an oizuru (oizuri) or pilgrim vest, and 8.6% carried a tsue or walking staff (which can be a specific pilgrim symbol)²⁷(207).

A pilgrim vest, or oizuri, may also be carried instead of worn. The individual can receive the seal obtained at temples directly on the garment. Before pilgrim scrolls and stamp books, it was most common to obtain the seal on the garment you were wearing during the journey. As we shall see later on, the oizuri can become a funeral vestment for some pilgrims.

Most of the people I spoke with who wore white garments or carried pilgrim paraphernalia believed themselves to be pilgrims. The most notable exception to this would be individuals whose dress is mandated either by a tour company or a structured pilgrimage organization. On at least two occasions, I spoke with non-pilgrims who said they were made to wear white against their preferences.

Some may argue that the wearing of pilgrim garments is a function of a particular pilgrimage and its traditions. For instance, more pilgrims seem to wear white in Shikoku than in other places. However, this assertion may be problematic for several reasons. First, the garments and accoutrements are both available and visible to a greater or lesser degree at all Buddhist pilgrimage locations. Second, one would expect to see these items more often on the most traditional routes rather than the modern ones. In my experience, I have seen them more often on new Kannon routes, such as the roughly 20-year-old Chugoku 33 Kannon route, than on the original Saigoku route. Third, I believe the tendency to dress as a pilgrim or not is often based on the separateness of the pilgrim landscape from the secular. As in the case of Mt. Kōya, all of Shikoku is pilgrimage space as it were. A Saigoku pilgrim will find herself stepping out of pilgrim temples into

downtown Kyoto. Pilgrims of the Chugoku Kannon temples are largely visiting temples, which are still in the relative countryside. Car and bus driven pilgrims who wear white are spared the curious scrutiny that strangely glad pilgrims on a train may experience. I have also seen a number of people slip on their pilgrim shirt just before entering a temple and remove it upon leaving. This also suggests that there is a comfort level within a certain space.

Like many aspects of pilgrim behavior, pilgrim associations have tried to promote standards of pilgrim dress and accessories with little success (See Appendix A). Some suggest a full head to toe outfit, while others admit that for long periods of walking, a more modified outfit is acceptable. Since the entire ensemble of pilgrim accoutrements sold at pilgrim temples could cost in excess of \$200, it is not surprising that the temple supported pilgrim associations encourage their use.

With the above exceptions noted, whether or not to display external signs is a personal choice. Pilgrim dress can represent an underlying identity, but there are tens of thousands of pilgrims each year who forgo such externals. As the example from Mt. Kōya illustrated, long-term pilgrims will frequently be outwardly identifiable as such, but will employ accessories somewhat practically and sparingly.

Darker Shades of Grey: Non-identity

Pilgrim locations can be buzzing centers of activity. They are places that attract almost anyone for a number of reasons. The casual visiting of temples and shrines is a undeniable element of Japanese culture. Consider Sensōji (浅草寺), a temple in Asakusa near the heart of Tokyo. While a landmark pilgrim temple and number 13 of the Bando

Kannon route, Sensōji is a whirlwind location for non-pilgrims. The temple and its environs have a carnival-like atmosphere with dozens of food stalls, souvenir shops, and restaurants. On a Saturday or Sunday during good weather, it would not be presumptuous to say that non-pilgrims may outnumber pilgrims by as much as 500 to one. By and large, we can consider the bulk of these individuals to be *casual temple visitors*. *Casual temple visitors* neither believe themselves to be pilgrims nor are seeking out multiple pilgrim destinations. They can be attracted to pilgrim temples and locations by any number of factors. A *casual temple visitor* is not necessarily a non-pious spectator. Within the crowd at Sensōji, we can see women and men praying earnestly, who are simply regular visitors that live nearby. While they often purchase amulets, paper fortunes, and rosaries, they are far less likely to receive a temple stamp.

We shall refer to non-pilgrims who seek out multiple pilgrim locations as *route circumambulators*. These individuals represent a proportion of those who travel pilgrim routes. Some may be latent pilgrims who have not yet grown into the identity, while others have absolutely no intentions of ever being pilgrims, and adamantly deny any such association. While seasoned pilgrims seem to welcome conversations about themselves, *route circumambulators* can frequently become very uncomfortable when subjected to questions. As with the *casual temple visitors*, these individuals can be full of devotion or may be void of any faithful gestures.

“I don’t know anything [about pilgrimage]... please don’t ask me any questions,” a young woman pleads in a very embarrassed tone (Anonymous Woman 19-5-03).²⁸ She and her traveling companion do seem to be a bit out of place. They are keying messages into their mobile phones, while waiting with their stamp books to receive the temple seal

of Kōfuku-ji (興福寺), a famous temple in Nara, which is number nine of the Saikoku Kannon temples. With their hair dyed nearly blond and dressed in short skirts and high heels, the two women in their early twenties have to step carefully to avoid the abundant deer droppings scattered about the gravel drive. While their stamp books indicate that they have been to roughly half of the 33 places on this route, both adamantly deny that they are pilgrims. When asked why they have come, one woman responds flatly, “Because we like temples (Anonymous Woman 19-5-04).” Then without any hint of pious action, they tuck their stamp books into their Gucci handbags and are on their way.

Simple temple enthusiasm is a common reason for non-pilgrims to circumnavigate the temples of a pilgrim route. In fact, a significant percentage of modern guidebooks, map books, and web pages, not published by pilgrimage associations, render detailed descriptions of the pilgrim trails and locations, completely void of any religious connotations.

In Kansai, perhaps the best example of this is Japan Railway’s promotion of its own stamp/seal collection system in association with what they refer to simply as “the 33 places of Saigoku (*JR Nishi-Nihon*).” Presumably, in place of, or in addition to the temple stamp records, the JR Company provides a master sheet in which numbered, paper, lotus flowers, which are available at the temple offices and stamp desks, are inserted. In many ways, those that promote secular circumambulation are not adding a new dimension to an otherwise holy journey, but instead are reflecting a number of individuals, who are already traveling to these locations without any personal religious associations²⁹.

A 67-year-old woman from Itami-hyogo prefecture would appear to be a seasoned pilgrim (Anonymous Woman 20-3-04).³⁰ While enjoying the early cherry blossoms at a pilgrim temple in southern Kyoto, she carefully describes her many travels. Not only had she completed the circuit of 88 temples on Shikoku, but her current journey is her third traversal of the 33 Saigoku temples. As with her current traveling companion, she frequently has friends ask to join her. In order to let them catch up, she has visited a number of temples as many as five times. In the year 2000, she consciously set out to complete a circuit of these same 33 temples as a commemoration of the millennium. Her religious faith would appear to be fairly strong. She carefully makes offerings to the many Buddhist images around the temple, and she speaks about volunteer work she does at the temple to which she belongs. Both she and her friend deny being pilgrims and say that they are traveling just for fun. Currently devoid of any outward signs of pilgrim identity, she describes how, against her preferences, she was made to wear the traditional white garments while traveling about Shikoku with a pilgrim sendatsu. She has used a scroll, a stamp book, and a oizuri to collect temple stamps. Curiously, she said that her use of these items was not limited to pilgrim temples at all. Any noteworthy place or event along the way was commemorated with these records. For instance, if she had a very nice stay at a hotel or hot spring resort, she would ask the desk clerk to give some signature or seal within the scroll or stamp book. Unlike the people we met above who hoped to create a family heirloom through their pilgrim stamp scroll, this woman was concerned that these things would become an undo burden on her next of kin after she passed away. Therefore, she had carefully explained to her daughter that these items may be placed with her before she is cremated in order to eliminate such a burden.

Indeed, for some, it may be ridiculous to assert that a religious woman who had made at least 155 visits to pilgrim locations is a non-pilgrim. However, I was surprised not only by her inherent lack of a pilgrim identity, but also by her apparent desire to distinguish herself from such an identity. Perhaps, just as some come in contact with pilgrims or pilgrim folklore, and wish to take on such a persona, others come in contact with it and remain resigned to distinguish themselves from it. Investigational approaches aside, this woman would seem to be quite content with the label “non-pilgrim.”

Pilgrims by Association, Accidental Pilgrims, Professional Pilgrims, and Compulsory Pilgrims

“I am here because my wife wanted to come...,” states a middle aged man from Saitama (Anonymous Man 15-11-03). In the warm fall sun at Dōji-do 童子堂 (sometimes read Warabe-dō) temple number 22 in Chichibu, this man explains the situation further: “My wife had begun the Bandō pilgrimage with her friends but the weather was very nice this weekend, so she suggested we [the two of them] come here (Anonymous Man 15-11-03).” Since he had only been to a handful of temples, he doesn’t consider himself a pilgrim, per se. But he explains that he has really enjoyed the day and that the area is very beautiful. I get a sense that he is warming up to the idea of pilgrim travel. Would he have begun this sort of thing by himself? It does not seem very likely. This tendency to travel as a result of social relationships is an important consideration for both pilgrims and non-pilgrim circumambulators.

Our romantic visions may cling to the image of a solitary, soul-searching pilgrim, but in reality the Shikoku data suggests that slightly less than 13% of those surveyed

travel alone (*Shikoku Henro* 2-3). In fact, reflecting the popularity of bus tours, nearly 50% of the respondents traveled in groups of 11 or more (2-3). Within these larger groups we can see that pilgrims travel with their husbands and wives (24%), with their parents (5.5%), with their friends (21.1%), with a son or daughter (7.8%), and with specially formed pilgrim Kō or confraternities (19.9%) (2-3). With these social relations, we can witness a range of motivations and interpretations. Often times, it may be a single member of a group, who may be the driving force behind these smaller social units. A highly visible example of this would include a son or daughter traveling with an elderly and slightly disabled parent, or a person helping a sick friend seeking a cure from pilgrim activities. While the “accidental pilgrim” maintains the pilgrim identity, the likelihood of them becoming a pilgrim without strong persuasion or a desire to help is unlikely. Even though self-motivation for the pilgrim activities may be somewhat low, they take up the identity by the influence of their social group or in direct support of it. Pilgrim identity by association is commonplace and is a standard consequence of both group dynamics and genuine assistance of the elderly and infirm.

Some pilgrim tour professionals, like Mayumi Sakuma (作間真弓), fully consider themselves pilgrims while leading others in the context of their work. She is a pilgrim tour leader in her twenties, working for Ai Travel in Hiroshima-city. Sakuma-san wears white pilgrim garments and uses a pilgrim stamp book to record all of her work related trips. She counts these journeys as much on her pilgrim resume as on her work resume.

For the last five years, online businesses have promoted what are known as “substitute pilgrims (“The Pilgrim Road Less”).” Ten companies now provide these

proxy-pilgrims who traverse the 88 temples of Shikoku by car or motorcycle on the customer's behalf. Starting at about ¥150,000 for the basic package, extras can include obtaining temple seals in a stamp book, having pictures taken of personal effects at pilgrim locations, and even side trips to places like Mt. Kōya ("The Pilgrim Road Less").

As strange as the notion of "substitute pilgrims" may seem, it is not uncommon for people to perform pilgrimages on another's behalf. For instance, it is not unusual for a person to become a pilgrim for the sake of a seriously ill individual who is unable to travel, or for a mother to travel to holy places to pray for a son who is about to take the college entrance examinations. Furthermore, merit transfer is a basic Mahayana Buddhist concept. Japanese Buddhist priests almost always end recitations of Buddhist sutras by chanting some form of a merit transfer or eko (回向)³¹. The recipient of this merit transfer can be very specific, such as a deceased person or a monastery's kitchen god. Since priests are routinely paid for their merit transferring services, paying professional pilgrims is not unreasonable. The result is another example of pilgrim identity that comes into being as a result of someone else.

Compulsory pilgrim identity has probably always existed. It is an especially interesting aspect to consider this point in contrast to theories concerning pilgrim freedom and liminality. Other examples of compulsory pilgrimage can be seen, apart from a Muslim's compulsory performance of the Hajj. In Europe, in the Middle Ages, pilgrimage was both penance and punishment for certain crimes³².

In Japan, a priest's eldest son may experience considerable pressure to become a priest himself, in order to take over the family temple. It is estimated that more than 80% of Buddhist priests inherit their temple from their father (see Jaffe 1). At some point in

these young priests' training, pilgrim activities can be mandated. For instance, Sōtō-zen novices are also sometimes required to become pilgrims sustained by begging. In Shikoku, I have witnessed contemporary, compulsory pilgrims in the form of Shingon novices who were on a mandated trip to the 88 temples.

Perhaps as was historically the case, we can consider individuals, who were driven to become pilgrims due to financial hardship or incurable illness, to be compulsory pilgrims. In these instances, we have the motivation for the identity coming not through a free choice, but through mandated behavior or extenuating circumstances. While some types of "pilgrims by association" may represent a very slight minority, others, such as those who aid fellow pilgrims, represent a significant number who require consideration.

Pilgrim Identity and Religious Identity

The degree to which Japanese people associates themselves with a particular Buddhist sect, practice, doctrine, teaching, or sectarian founder is an interesting and complicated question that has direct bearing on the pilgrims of Japan. If a person maintains that they are a "Baptist," their identity may be reinforced by a number of things including: weekly worship services, the self-initiated consecration of baptism, regular tithing, and identity within a church community. However, in Japan, religious identity in general, and Buddhist identity specifically, often lacks these operators, which reinforce such an identity. Government mandates, during the Tokugawa era, required families to register with a local Buddhist temple. With a few notable exceptions, most of these familial sectarian associations continue to this day. Furthermore, Buddhist sectarian associations are mostly patriarchal. Married women are normally expected to be

associated with their husband's sect. As a result, while most families have a Buddhist sectarian association, there may be little in the way of personal association with that organization. Add to this other religious associations, such as with Shinto, and we can see that religious identity is a complicated and potentially nebulous affair. However, unlike many Japanese people, most pilgrims do seem to know to which sect their family belongs.

By contrast, the pilgrim identity is straightforward, clearly demarcated, reinforced through activity, and sometimes even visible at a distance. Unlike most people's family sectarian identity, it can be a personal choice. The pilgrim identity can develop in conjunction with the sectarian identity or entirely independent of it. At the very least, if we were to consider sectarian associations to be strong, then we would have to admit that statistical data suggests that pilgrimage may well be the most pan-sectarian Buddhist activity in all of Japan.

In relation to familial sectarian associations, pilgrim identity could represent ideological extremes at two ends. A pilgrim, with strong personal associations with Shingon Buddhism, may consciously believe their pilgrim activities represent the epitome of structured orthodoxy. Pilgrims who are members of some form of Shingon Buddhism are far and away seen in the largest numbers. The Waseda University Shikoku data records 41.6% of those surveyed were members of Shingon (*Shikoku Henro* 14), while the Chichibu data showed that Shingon participants represented 18.4% (*Junrei no Michi* 209). Their identity and practice as pilgrims are reinforced and encouraged as a valuable religious practice (see section below titled "Self-power," "Other power," and Ascetic Practice).

On the other extreme, a faithful pilgrim who practices Jōdō-Shin Buddhism could, by sectarian reckoning, which stresses an “other-power” faith placed in Amida Buddha and discourages “self-power” practices, be considered heretical. The orthodoxy of the Shingon Buddhists may be quite intentional, while the heterodoxy of the Shin Buddhists may be entirely immaterial.

I enjoyed many conversations with a woman in her late fifties named Watanabe. Watanabe-san, who comes from a family of dedicated rice farmers, was a diligent custodian at the dormitories of Hiroshima University (*Watanabe*).³³ She would frequently pause from her work and, with a warm smile and a deep Hiroshima accent, discuss her deep religious faith. Watanabe-san proudly states her devotion to Jōdō-shin Buddhism’s founder Shinran, Kannon, and Kūkai, but it seems that Kannon has the most central place in her heart. Her son had become a Jōdō-shin priest despite the fact that her husband, a friendly farmer who would join her in her work on Saturdays, was not a priest³⁴. She proudly calls herself a pilgrim and had completed the Shikoku route, the Saigoku route, and was working on the Chugoku region’s Kannon pilgrimage. In a grandmotherly tone, she responded to my suggestions that Shinran might prefer her to stay home and chant Amida’s name in thanksgiving for his grace. “How could pilgrimage be considered bad?” was the main gist of her response. For Watanabe-san, it seemed that all acts of Buddhist devotion were legitimate. Chanting praise to Amida-buddha did not mean that you should not chant praise to Kūkai or travel about in devotion to Kannon. For her, this was a very obvious point. While a Shin-shu specialist might see doctrinal difficulties with her approach, she was very proud of being a Shin-Buddhist, having a priest for a son, and of being a pilgrim.

Certain areas in Japan are dominated by a particular Buddhist sect. As a result, pilgrim tour groups from these regions can have a majority of people, whose family belongs to a particular sect. Mayumi Sakuma, the pilgrim guide, explains the situation of hometown and sect:

The guests who come on my company's tours are only from Hiroshima, therefore, 80% are of the Jōdō-shin sect. Also with this, it is different in other places, for instance, in Okayama, the Shingon sect abounds. For the Shikoku pilgrim locations, I think that the percentage of pilgrims who go [by tour] from outside prefectures, Osaka, Hiroshima, Okayama, etc, are the most plentiful (Sakuma Mayumi "Re: Sorry").³⁵

Perhaps the relative sectarian homogeneity of some tours accounts for sectarian identity being a slight issue, but there seems to be more to the situation than this. For instance when Sakuma-san was asked if she had heard people discussing which sect they belonged to, she responded:

I have almost never heard such conversations. Why this is true is because, on the pilgrimage journey, people do not ask about religious sects. Since people who are pilgrimaging understand this well, quarreling about religious sects definitely does not exist (Sakuma Mayumi "Re: Sorry").³⁶

These comments correspond directly with my conversations and observations. In fact, the above statements seem to suggest an unwritten rule that makes such discussions of sect taboo. Time and time again, I found that the quickest way to ruin an excellent conversation with a pilgrim was to bring up the subject of their family's sect. I would add that this taboo is not simply out of a pluralistic respect for other faiths, but also stems

from a genuine embarrassment on the part of a pilgrim's ignorance of or indifference to their family's sect.

Among Buddhist pilgrims in Japan, it is not usually the differences of sectarian identity, but rather the unity of the pilgrim identity that seems to shine through. This stands in stark contrast to the methodology of John Eade and Michael Sallnow, which paints pilgrimage primarily as a sort of battleground for competing discourses. This is not to deny that pilgrims in Japan do in fact have an incredible range of interpretations for their actions, motivations, and relationships to deities. It is just that these, for the most part, are held privately. Additionally, as we shall explore in greater detail, the pilgrim identity and the pilgrim's activities themselves, can evolve into a virtual "sect of pilgrimage." As such, it is the sameness of pilgrims, rather than the diversity of Buddhist sects that is often discernable.

Buddhism and Buddhist sects in Japan are most often associated with death and funerals. Concerning sectarian identity and pilgrim identity, it is not surprising that many people associate pilgrim activities with a preparation for death. One can imagine the scene of a dedicated pilgrim's funeral. While the priest carries on with chants that no one can understand, we see the deceased lying in state with her pilgrim vest or perhaps a pilgrim stamp book. The words and actions of the priest are difficult and strange, while the symbols of the pilgrim are simple and even tangible. While a pilgrim may have both a sectarian identity and a pilgrim identity, the former can be somewhat compulsory, while the latter is most often a chosen identity³⁷.

CHAPTER III

SPECIFIC PILGRIM ISSUES

Our discussion above has centered on a number of specific identity issues that play a significant role in the pilgrim's experience and our notions about pilgrimage. In this chapter we will consider a range of specific topics that must inevitably be considered. With some of these issues, such as ascetic practice or material benefits, we can consider both the statements of pilgrimage promoting institutions as well as individual pilgrim opinions. Other issues, such as pilgrim recreation, have not received a great deal of attention. Steeped in diversity, none of these topics establish general statements about the nature of pilgrimage. However, we can begin to recognize that there are clusters of individuals with similar approaches and beliefs.

“Self-power”, “Other-power,” and Ascetic Practice

I did not recognize Roberto Garcia when I met with him for the third time (Garcia). Taking time away from his stress filled duties as the Chairman of the Board of Citibank in Mexico, Roberto, in his mid-sixties, and his wife Claudia, in her mid thirties, have spent the last eight weeks studying and practicing Buddhism in Japan.³⁸ Their approach has been as intensive as it has been eclectic. In the morning and evenings, they

practice seated meditation at a Sōtō-zen temple, several times a week they meet with an outgoing professor from Taisho University to discuss Tibetan Buddhism, and in the rest of their spare time, with the aid of private limousine, they relentlessly pursue Japanese Buddhist art in all of its forms. Roberto's appearance has changed radically because he has shaven his head in preparation for their upcoming trip to Shikoku. I am quite surprised by his glowing white tonsure and quiz him about it. I ask if such a radical change in appearance would draw comment from the other executives when he returned to work several weeks. He responds that it certainly will, but that such preparations were necessary for a journey of this magnitude. In my mind, I was trying to understand how a limousine chartered drive to the first twelve temples of an 88 temple circuit could have great spiritual significance, but over the course of lunch, I became convinced that the Garcias firmly believed that their journey would be a potentially enlightenment-generating ascetic practice. While this belief is reinforced by a number of sources, it is somewhat exceptional among contemporary pilgrims.

The Garcias demonstrate two important characteristics. First, their overall approach to the pilgrimage is steeped in emulation of the central figure rather than worship or devotion. They understand Kūkai to be more of a guide than religious savior. Since, this journey was a form of ascetic practice for Kūkai, following his example; it is a form of ascetic practice for them as well. Second, the Garcias recognize themselves to be pilgrims even before engaging in any formal pilgrimage activities. As seen in his shaven head, Roberto outwardly displays a significant shift in identity. While some may not understand themselves to be pilgrims until they have had a number of personally

significant experiences, others believe they are pilgrims even prior to formal pilgrimage experiences.

Rev. Miyahara, abbot of the Shingon Buddhist temple Ryuzō-ji (龍蔵寺) just outside of Yamaguchi-city, is an active promoter of pilgrims and pilgrimage. With the help of his son, he has helped create a strong institutional base for the Chugoku Kannon Reijō. If you ask Rev. Miyahara why people should go on pilgrimage, he will carefully explain that it is a form of ascetic practice (*Miyahara*). Like zazen, or seated meditation, he says that pilgrimage is a “*level up*” ascetic practice. Since the Chugoku route is only circumnavigated by motorized transport, he seems to assert that this is legitimate ascetic practice³⁹.

John Calvin maintained that pilgrimage aided no man’s salvation (see Turner “Image” 31). From a religious perspective that appeals only to divine grace, activities, which are believed to affect a person’s condition in this life or the next are, technically speaking, heretical. This is largely why Christian pilgrimage has been traditionally associated with Roman Catholicism rather than Protestantism. With our previous look at pilgrim archetypes, we saw individuals that personified self-power, or *jiriki* (自力), in Japanese. But pilgrim tales are also filled with miraculous cures and people, whose own efforts were ineffective, being saved by a deity or “other-power,” *tariki* (他力) in Japanese. As such, discussions of *jiriki*, *tariki*, and ascetic practice represent one field where individual questions posed to the pilgrim can yield a range of interpretations.

Theoretically, most figures and images associated with the pilgrim locations could yield themselves to either a *jiriki* or *tariki* interpretation. Let us consider the figure of

Kannon, which can be seen as an object of devotion as well as an advocate of self-power. In Buddhist circles, pan-sectarian appeal to Kannon demonstrates that this figure's character is not fixed. Even in interpreting Kannon's doctrinal nature, we are faced with a number of variables including: gender⁴⁰, multiple incarnations (33 total) of very different character, status as an esoteric or exoteric Buddhist figure, status as a bodhisattva (and the implications therein), *upayic* methods, worldly benefits, relationship to Amida Buddha, and an exemplar of compassion and/or wisdom.

Pilgrims frequently carry both the Heart Sutra and the Kannon Sutra in a single chant book or gongyō (勤行) and, if we take the words for their literal meaning, we have two Kannon of very different character. Chanting the Heart Sutra is perhaps one of the single most common and important rituals pertaining to Japanese Buddhist pilgrimage. However, the Heart Sutra is a bit of an anomaly. It is a text from the *Prajñāpāramitā* or Perfection of Wisdom tradition, but unlike longer versions of the text, this shortened version has Kannon (*Avalokiteśvara*) rather than Śākyamuni Buddha or Ananda as the principle figure. In this short text, we have Kannon achieving release from suffering through realization of the emptiness of all things. Due to this inherent emptiness, all entities are declared to be without their "own nature." Thus, even the most basic teachings of Buddhism, for example, the existence of suffering and the liberation from suffering, are negated in this sutra. The Perfection of Wisdom, understood as recognizing this inherent emptiness, shows the non-duality of all things in the phenomenal world. Such a literal interpretation of this text would suggest that praying to Kannon as a separate being is counter to the teachings⁴¹. Taken in this exoteric spirit, Kannon is not a

being of devotion but a being of emulation. Kannon is an example of enlightenment rather than simply an all-powerful deity. Interestingly, Turner points out that a literal understanding of liturgy is usually more liminal than other appropriations (Turner “Image” 6).

The Kannon Sutra paints the picture of a benevolent, powerful being that does not advocate non-duality but faith in Kannon, as a powerful deity. The Kannon Sutra, though regarded as a self-standing text, is chapter 25 in the Lotus Sutra. It discusses Kannon’s supernatural powers, which allow this deity to release people from the most troubling of circumstances and to provide tremendous worldly benefits. Kannon, implored by name, will give release from execution, attack by bandits, trouble on the high sea, death from fire, and the sting or bite of venomous creatures to name just a few (Murano 316-324). More practically, one can obtain a desired son or daughter, repose from hail or rain, release from lustful ways, elimination of the suffering associated with old age, or even aid in legal situation (Murano 316-324). The verses of this chapter conclude:

Do not doubt him even at a moment’s thought!

The Pure Saint World-Voice-Perceiver[Kannon] is reliable

When you suffer, and when you are confronted

With the calamity of death.

By all these merits, he sees

All living beings with his compassionate eyes.

The ocean of his accumulated merits is boundless.

Therefore, bow before him (Murano 324)!

While homage and obeisance is stressed continually, nowhere does this text suggest emulation of Kannon's good deeds, nor does it suggest that one strive for the taproot of this compassion in a source such as the Perfection of Wisdom. Faith is the overriding message of the Kannon Sutra, while the Heart Sutra's literal meaning stresses the self-power which is available to relieve suffering⁴². Based on these respective portrayals routinely chanted and carried by many pilgrims, Kannon could be said to promote both tariki-faith and jiriki-practice. Therefore, doctrinally speaking, a Kannon pilgrim could be associated with either self-power, other-power, or both.

Kūkai, as a traveling partner, a saint, or a divinity, has perhaps an even greater range of interpretations than Kannon (See Reader, Tanabe 166-170). He is not simply a transcendent being, but frequently thought to be "among us" in the sense that he is both living and corporeal. One often hears the myths that he is walking the pilgrim trail in Shikoku (clock-wise), and that he is still meditating in his mausoleum on Mt. Kōya. At the same time, he is described by Shingon Buddhism to be identical to Dainichi-nyorai, the "Great Sun Buddha," the highest being in esoteric Buddhism (see Arai 27 for an explanation of this).

If the primary figures associated with pilgrims and their activities lend themselves to even a doctrinal range of interpretations regarding jiriki and tariki, then personal views on the matter are destined to be even more diverse. As a result, it is a mistake to characterize pilgrim routes and, thus pilgrims, according to such classifications as jiriki and tariki.

Joseph Kitagawa's typologies of Japanese Buddhist Pilgrimage demonstrate a struggle to understand self-power and other-power, in relation to the pilgrim. In his work titled Understanding Japanese Religion, Kitagawa discerns three types of pilgrimage present in Japanese religion: (1) *pilgrimage to sacred mountains*, (2) *pilgrimage based on faith in certain divinities*, and (3) *pilgrimage based on faith in charismatic persons* (127-136)⁴³. Near the end of his treatment he summarizes his typologies of pilgrimages with a discussion of self-power or *jiriki* (自力) versus other-power or *tariki* (他力). *Pilgrimage to the Sacred Mountain* has an emphasis on ascetic and physical discipline, thus, even though faith may be present, it is largely "a soteriological path based on self-power (*jiriki*)" (135). He goes on to explain,

The second type, namely, the pilgrimage based on faith in certain divinities, tends to be more individualistic and also lacks rigorous ascetic emphasis because its soteriological path relies on the saving power of divinities (tariki) (130).

The third category, *pilgrimage based on faith in charismatic figures*, is a hybrid including aspects of the first two. In his view, the charismatic figure acts as both deity and guide. The pilgrim relies on this other-power (*tariki*) but this power is immanent rather than transcendent. Thus, the other-power has the character of a "fellow pilgrim" (135-136).

After the multiplicity of interpretations of figures like Kūkai and Kannon, the next point to recognize is that most Buddhist pilgrims in Japan seem to have some belief, to a greater or lesser extent, that their actions have some effect on their situation. After all, as John Calvin suggests, the act of pilgrimage itself, suggests the absence of total faith in divine power⁴⁴. The belief that one can personally change a situation can be as subtle as the ability to effect simple peace of mind, or as dramatic as the ability to attain

enlightenment or gain a favorable rebirth. Speaking with the Garcias, they stated very clearly that they believed enlightenment was very possible as a result of their pilgrim journey. From the material they were reading and the conversations they were having, it was easy to see why they believed this to be so. In accord with the fundamental Shingon Buddhist interpretation of the pilgrimage, they had learned that Shikoku is an island mandala divided into four dojo, or training halls, corresponding to its four prefectures. Tokushima prefecture is the dojo of aspiring to enlightenment(発心の道場 which is short for 発菩提心). Kōchi prefecture is the dojo of ascetic practice (修行の道場). Ehime prefecture is the dojo of wisdom (菩提の道場). And finally, Kagawa prefecture is the dojo of nirvana (涅槃の道場).

In order to state that some pilgrimages, and subsequently pilgrims, are primarily based on “other power,” then one must deny that these pilgrimages are a form of ascetic practice. Being consistent, Kitagawa denies that pilgrimage based on faith in a certain divinity, such as Kannon, is an ascetic practice (130). In Japanese “ascetic practice” can be rendered with the terms shugyō (修行) and kugyō (苦行). The former is most often associated with Buddhist asceticism or training, while the latter with non-Buddhist asceticism that Shakyamuni Buddha recommended avoiding⁴⁵. The Waseda University research would suggest that the vast majority of travelers of the Chichibu pilgrim route, which has Kannon as its central figure, believe that walking a pilgrim route is a form of shugyō. They asked the question, “Concerning pilgrimage, do you think it essentially has the connotation of a shugyō which is done by walking in the road (203)?” 30.6% said

they definitely thought it was, and 48.6% thought it was to a certain degree (208). With almost 80% of 533 respondents associating pilgrimage with shugyō, it is exceedingly difficult to maintain that some pilgrimages and pilgrims are primarily based on “other power.” Prior in the text, we considered the respect or even reverence shown by bus driven pilgrims to walking pilgrims. This reverence could reflect that, for some, walking pilgrims are closer to an ascetic ideal.

A woman in her 80s and dressed in white, teeters precariously on a potentially lethal set of sandstone stairs at Entsu-temple (円通寺), temple number seven of the Chugoku region 33 Kannon temples (Anonymous 3-02). Though parking may allow for a tour bus, the old temples are hardly designed for the elderly or disabled. The 40 foot tall staircase she is struggling with has all the attributes of those on an Aztec pyramid designed to allow a sacrificial body to fall unimpeded to the ground. When I offer her a hand, she pauses, smiles from ear to ear, and says, “This is my shugyō (Anonymous 3-02)!”

Even in the context of modern transportation and pilgrim tours, one still sees the examples of genuine struggles among the pilgrims. For the elderly and sick, it can be making it to and from the bus or car. For others, it is a considerable monetary sacrifice to complete an 88 or 100 temple route. It is precisely the belief that their own efforts are effective that sustains pilgrims, such as this elderly woman.

Although pilgrims may have an inherent tendency toward the jiriki end of the spectrum, pilgrims motivated by a desire to show thanks to a specific deity, may represent the strongest example of tariki-faith on the pilgrim trail. As pointed out by the Buddhist leader Shinran, in a religious system governed only by grace, a thanksgiving

posture is perhaps most appropriate. In the next chapter, we will consider several examples of pilgrim thanksgiving and how the pilgrim can gravitate from a self-power to an other-power stance and vice versa. Therefore, we should understand that considerations of jiriki, tariki, and shugyō are not simply different approaches among various pilgrims, but can represent various stages within a single pilgrim's career.

Pilgrim Play!

Standing, seemingly in contrast to rigorous ascetic practice or somber religious faith, is the multitude of recreational possibilities available to the pilgrim. We have already encountered some situations above where recreation has factored into the behavior of pilgrims and non-pilgrims. The pilgrim temples and many other locations along the pilgrim trail can provide excellent recreational opportunities. Even though 72.3% of the Chichibu questionnaire respondents believed that pilgrimage was different from a vacation, it is a rare pilgrim indeed whose solemnity would prevent her from having some fun along the way (*Junrei no Michi* 207). Even pilgrims with grave requests or health problems seem to find, not only solace, but also genuine pleasure in their travels. In fact, both in the present and in the past, people have taken on the identity of pilgrims in order to provide themselves with these recreational opportunities, when their own conscious or outside limitations would have made it difficult.

Japan's most popular recreational activities can be found amongst the activities of the pilgrims. According to the Institute for Free Time Design, the three most popular leisure activities in Japan from 1997-2000 were dining out, driving, and domestic travel (*Japan Almanac* 269)⁴⁶. If we consider the likelihood of listening to music while driving

and picnicking along the way, we could add two more of the twenty most popular leisure activities for that same time period (269).

The high priority placed on food, and dining out for the pilgrim, is undeniable. Pilgrim literature is filled with pictures of the respective fare available at various locations and temples. Some pilgrim guidebooks have food on nearly every page. The most popular pilgrim temples have all of their main approaches flanked with restaurants, food stalls, and food related souvenirs, especially those souvenirs, or *omiyage* items, which are usually foods unique to a geographic area. Dining out is a heavily advertised part of the pilgrim bus tours (and tourism in general).

Despite the high cost of domestic travel, it remains a very popular recreational activity. Many sources indicate that domestic travel has increased considerably since the events of September 11, 2001. The most popular destinations, such as hot springs, are commonplace along the pilgrim trail as well. Hot springs, such as *Dōgō onsen* in Shikoku's Matsuyama-city, see both tourists and pilgrims lining up to enjoy this famous attraction.

As we contemplated above, temple visitation itself can be considered a recreational activity. As places of remarkable architecture, visible history, natural beauty, and even as sanctuaries from the urban landscape, temples are inherent domains of leisure. Their popularity owes as much to tourist information as it does to the words of the faithful. Bookstores consistently have a large number of guides, which are not aimed specifically at pilgrim locations per se, but old temples and significant Buddhist images.

The popularity of multi-site, non-pilgrim, temple circuits is also well established. The town of Onomichi, a historic town on the Seto inland sea, where one of only three

bridges connects the main island of Honshu with Shikoku, has a good example of this. The “Onomichi Circuit of Old Temples” is a route, which passes through seven of the most historical and famous Buddhist temples. This is clearly a recreational activity that centers on Buddhist temples, two of which are stops on the Chugoku 33 Kannon pilgrim circuit. The old temple route is not referred to as a pilgrimage route. While we might allow that for some people it may have the same significance as any major pilgrimage, for others it is a secular tour of a historic village. If leisure itself draws Japanese to temples, then it should be no surprise that leisure can be a very important component of pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage can be thought of as a *justifiable frivolity* for many elderly pilgrims. Japan’s elderly suffered through survival-like subsistence during the war only to emerge into the rapid, strenuous work of the post-war years. During these busy times, few developed distinct, lifelong leisure interests. As a result, upon retirement there seems to be a void that for many westerners would be filled with hobbies and sports. Pilgrimage gives these practical, hard working individuals an opportunity for leisure that seems inherently worthwhile. I believe this *justifiable frivolity*, under the auspices of religious activity, may allow many traditionally minded elderly to enjoy themselves in a worry or guilt-free manner.

At the other end of the spectrum, we can understand recreational aspects related to younger pilgrims. There seems to be a thin line between what some might regard as “ascetic practice” and others as modern adventure sports. The pilgrim trail can represent a genuine physical challenge like a marathon or even something like a “Buddhist Appalachian Trail.” The inherent popularity of activities such as hiking, backpacking,

and camping (in addition to driving) suggest that the challenge of a pilgrim circuit is a significant draw.

A number of pilgrims approach their activities much like a hobby. For these “weekend warriors” it can be a pursuit that is enjoyed within a variety of contexts and for years. As one would, with any other type of hobby, these pilgrims can occupy themselves with preparations and the plentiful literature, which allows for previews of the coming attractions. They can choose the most ideal times to visit certain places and can augment their journeys considerably with other local places of interest. However, just because pilgrimage can have character similar to a hobby, does not mean that genuine piety or devotion is necessarily absent.

The increased popularity of pilgrimage, since the 1970s, is undoubtedly due in part to these recreational dimensions. The recreational aspects of pilgrim behavior may explain why it remains popular, while religion in general in Japan, seems to be in a state of decline. It is a critical element that all concepts of pilgrims and pilgrimage must allow for. Others have suggested the existence of non-pious elements of pilgrim activity. There is some truth in Victor Turner’s proclamation that, “Every pilgrim is half tourist and every tourist is half pilgrim (Turner “Image” 35).” Temple visitation is already an established leisurely pastime. Pilgrim activities, considered as a *justifiable frivolity*, a hobby, or pure physical challenge, represent a significant point of consideration for understanding pilgrims.

Fear and Desire

In Japan, many people pilgrimage to realize a distinct outcome that is achievable as a result of genuine effort and/or divine grace. Therefore, motivations such as fear or worldly desires require careful treatment. Fear and desire can manifest themselves in motives that can be quite lofty, such as good rebirth in the next life, or can be much more mundane. The latter are included in the term *genze riyaku* (or simply *goriyaku*), or practical benefits, such as traffic safety or good marriage (see Reader and Tanabe 200-1).

Ian Reader and George Tanabe distinguish two primary divisions in regard to *genze riyaku*. These are encompassed in the terms *yakuyoku*, or the prevention of danger, and *kaiun*, or the opening of good fortune (Reader and Tanabe, 46). Both types are visible in pilgrim requests, written on the pilgrim's version of a calling card, which is called *osamefuda*, or simply *ofuda*. A survey of the requests on the *ofuda* shows a range of this-worldly benefits including (from most popular): good health, for the benefit of ancestors, family safety, healing, education, traffic safety, good marriage/children, success in vows/opening of fortune, prevention of danger, for the benefit of the spirit of dead fetuses (Tanabe and Reader 200-1).

Interestingly, some pilgrim literature, which is produced by pilgrimage associations, asserts that traditionally, the primary benefit received as a result of pilgrimage was favorable rebirth for oneself and others. These writings claim that over time the strong faith relating to pilgrimage's ability to help with death degenerated into a faith concerned with practical benefits. For example, an introduction in a guide to the Chugoku Kannon Reijo states:

In the Kannon Sutra, we are taught about Kannon Bodhisattva's mysterious grace. It tells us that if any being, who is receiving any type of

pain, single-mindedly chants Kannon's name, Kannon will appear before them and give relieving grace. This is accomplished by means of the Great Compassionate/Great Merciful Bodhisattva (Kannon), who freely changes form using her 33 manifestations.

Kannon faith has flourished since old times. But more specifically, regarding Kannon pilgrimage, it had its origin in the Nara period with Yamatohase temple's Tokudōshōnin. Tokudōshōnin traveled about in the "other world" (hell) and received from Enmadaiō (The Great King of Hell) the 33 place stamp that is associated with Kannon Bodhisattva. From this beginning, he advised people on the grace of Kannon's faith. The purpose of Tokudōshōnin's prayer is for people's comfort in their future lives. Furthermore, since Kezanhōō later revived this curative Kannon pilgrimage, it has become widespread among the common people. The wishes of each person, who clings to this limitless, mysterious wisdom, have come to the point where they have sought practical worldly benefits, such as the realization of a dream, the desire to be without disease or misfortune, and the extinction of a sinful life.

Furthermore,[tales of] the faith of each person, who received a benefit from Kannon due to pilgrimage, regularly circulated about in the course of history. This rewarded faith has brought about the construction of many Kannon pilgrimage locations throughout the provinces (Tomiei Chugoku

Kannon Reijo Hajimemi).⁴⁷

The traditional motifs of Japanese Buddhist pilgrims, suggest a strong relationship with death including a popular belief that the pilgrim's white clothes represent their own burial garments (See also Appendix A). Pilgrimage was traditionally recognized as an activity that could both aid in personal rebirth and salvation, as well as a means to assist dead relatives. The above survey of *ofuda* suggests that the desire for practical benefits far outweighs the desire to assist one's ancestors. Consequently, as the pilgrim association's writing points out, this may represent a shift in pilgrim motivations over time. The above passage hints that when pilgrimage changed from a more elite activity to one employed by the common people, it became more associated with practical benefits. This seems quite plausible though it might be difficult to prove conclusively. However, it does underscore that the changing interpretations of the pilgrims can infuse their activities and motives with dynamic characteristics.

As we have seen in our previous look at the Kannon Sutra, the above passage reinforces, through textual authority, the benefits of every sort that can be realized through worship of this deity and through pilgrim activities dedicated to her. Although Kannon, like other deities, is associated with specific benefits, whether or not the average pilgrim routinely understands a "division of labor" among Buddhist deities has yet to be determined. That is to say, are there noticeable differences in the benefits associated with Kannon, Kōbō-Daishi, and Jizō?

For a contemporary discussion of benefits sought by the pilgrim, let us consider the case of Inoue-san⁴⁸ (Anonymous 10-04-04).⁴⁹ Inoue-san might be described as the "alpha-female" of a group of four female pilgrims in their late forties and early fifties.

The women, who are walking from temple to temple in Chichibu on a warm spring day, all share the common bond that they were born in the Kansai area and, after marrying, moved to the greater Tokyo area. These four are as giggly as schoolgirls as they pause frequently to contemplate a flowering tree or take yet another picture. Inoue-san asserts her influence from time to time, suggesting that they turn this way, or that we wait once again for the oldest woman who just cannot seem to keep up.

Though the women bear no external signs of being pilgrims, they are visibly shocked when I ask them if they consider themselves to be pilgrims. They all assert overwhelmingly that of course they are pilgrims.

When we complete the 40-minute hike to the next temple, and after she has had a chance to rather formally burn incense, bow, and pray, I have a chance to speak at length with Inoue-san (Anonymous 10-04-04). Originally from the Nara area, she graduated from Kyoto University and is currently living in Nishi-Funabashi in Chiba-prefecture. She explains that she married after college and has two daughters in their twenties. It is for the benefit of her two daughters that she is embarking on this pilgrimage. With great sincerity, she describes her worry concerning the fact that her daughters have not married. Overall, she would like to see them marry well and be happy and content. In a sense, it is as if she has done all she can do with respect to mothering, and now she can only really affect the future of her daughters through a higher power.

Nothing about Inoue-san's approach, or the benefits she seeks, are particularly extraordinary. Her requests are generally altruistic, steeped in motherly love and concern. Though some may say that worthwhile husbands are a material benefit, she hopes mostly for those intangibles, which come from a good marriage: happiness and contentment.

Inoue-san is an intelligent woman who is both making personal efforts and imploring a deity, who is said to have infinite mercy, for something that any reasonable parent might want. Far from extreme in her approach, she is praying resolutely while walking around and genuinely enjoying herself with her friends.

We shall return to the topic of benefits sought by pilgrims in the next chapter. Other important questions remain in regard to the pilgrim identity and worldly benefits. Already, we can see that individual pilgrim's motivations can exist across a broad range. From desire for frivolous recreation to the most sincere fear of death, the pilgrim identity remains constant while the reasons for pilgrimage are quite variable.

Unending Circles: Ongoing Pilgrim Travel

Contrary to a common belief that modern approaches and motorized transportation has led to a degeneration of pilgrimages, they have, in fact, spawned a sizable cadre of devoted pilgrims for whom being a pilgrim can be a life long identity and for whom pilgrim activities represent primary religious activities. Historically, it would have been exceedingly difficult for a pilgrim to complete six or seven pilgrim routes, or to continue pilgrim travel well into their 60's, 70's, and 80's. After all, death was considered to be a real possibility for pilgrims of the pre-modern eras.

A pilgrim votive at Hō'un-ji (法雲寺), temple number 30 in Chichibu, dated from 1536, refers to the linking of the Saigoku, Bandō, and Chichibu routes to produce a 100 temple pilgrim journey (see Enbutsu 83). At least from this point on, a bigger picture of pilgrim travel was possible. The pilgrim archetypes were individuals who traveled about for a lifetime, not who simply finished a route and went home. Smaller regional pilgrimages were promoted throughout Japan in the Edo era, making pilgrim travel a

reality that became widespread throughout the country. However, travel was still subject to restrictions and crossing a government checkpoint could be problematic, even for a pilgrim⁵⁰. For the average person, a pilgrim journey outside of these local routes was to remain expensive and potentially perilous (imagine simply walking from Edo to Shikoku!). Individual trips taken by foot would require significant amounts of time. As such, it stands to reason that rather significant motives might be required for an individual to go to all this trouble. It was an exceptional person who had traversed multiple pilgrim routes such as the linking of the 100 Kannon temples.

In contrast, contemporary Japan has a tremendous infrastructure dedicated to pilgrims. At least 100 pilgrim routes, spread fairly evenly throughout Japan, are commonly circumnavigated. As we have discussed, pilgrimage organizations, capable tour companies, and a range of media support these routes. While pilgrim tours and overnight accommodations can be expensive, an independent spirit coupled with ample use of public transportation makes pilgrim travel possible for almost anyone. The overall result is that more people are able to travel to more pilgrim locations located throughout Japan.

The Waseda University data demonstrates how commonplace engaging in multiple pilgrim routes has become. The data collected in Shikoku shows that nearly 60% of the individuals interviewed had experience with pilgrim routes besides Shikoku (*Shikoku Henro* 14). The Bandō Kannon route was most popular (32.5%), followed by Chichibu (13%), others not listed (15.5%)⁵¹, “mini” Shikoku (11%), and Saigoku (5%)(17). The data collected in March of 1997 at Chichibu locations shows that a remarkable 81% of the individuals interviewed had experience outside of the pilgrim

route in Chichibu (*Junrei no Michi* 207). The Bandō route again ranked first (31.7%), followed by Saigoku (20.6), Shikoku (20.1%), and other routes (8.6%) (207). The Chichibu survey form contained two significant differences. Participants could mark more than one choice for outside experience, and they could also indicate if they were circumnavigating the route past a first completion. 36.8% had returned to travel the route again (207).

Ai Travel's pilgrim tour guide, Mayumi Sakuma, gives a detailed description on the tendency of guests to travel on various pilgrim routes. Her fairly qualified statements include statistics collected by her company, as well as her personal experience with roughly 1000 pilgrimage-tour guests. She states:

Concerning our guests, approximately 70% of the people travel to other pilgrimages. While there are people who travel to other pilgrimages, also there are others who pilgrimage to the same pilgrim locations dozens of times, and so on. It seems, perhaps, that there are many people with the motivation to try various pilgrim locations. Additionally, there are also many people who pilgrimage to the 33 temples of Bandō, the 33 temples of Saigoku, and the 34 temples of Chichibu in order to do Japan's 100 Kannon pilgrimage. Of course, with what is said to be the implication of piling up benefits, there are many people who pilgrimage to the same locations repeatedly. Currently, there is also a flood of information, and there are various places throughout the country in each area, where one can visit pilgrim locations. Additionally, there are people who throughout their whole life span are said to continue pilgrimaging (Sakuma

"Re: sorry) .⁵²

The above data and statements contain several points, which are especially noteworthy. First, the high percentages (60%-80%), demonstrate that most pilgrims are traveling beyond the confines of a single pilgrim route. Whereas, historically the completion of the Shikoku or Saigoku routes might have been considered a lifetime achievement, most contemporary pilgrims have either completed a major pilgrim route and moved on to the next or, as many pilgrims have explained to me, they are engaging in several routes simultaneously. The pilgrim descriptions, given by Kitagawa's three types of pilgrimage, are meaningless if a person is dabbling in two types of pilgrim circuits at once (as many are).

In the face of such data and in the context of my own experiences, I would say that it is impossible to give institutionally specific descriptions of pilgrims or her interpretations, actions, and motives. If Shikoku travelers were primarily "devotees of Kōbō Daishi," as some have suggested, then it would seem that the "Mini" Shikoku pilgrimages would have been a more popular second choice than the Kannon routes, which accounted for 50.5% of other experiences. The reverse could also be stated for individuals who began with experience on a Kannon route. Up to 30% of the individuals surveyed in Chichibu had reported experiences in Shikoku and on "other routes" (allowing that some of these "others" may be regional or local Kannon routes). How can we discuss the Shikoku pilgrim as being different in nature from the Kannon pilgrim when the distinction is merely a difference in weekends? More than anything else, this information requires us to consider the Buddhist pilgrim in Japan well beyond the context of single pilgrimage institution. In the future, I think that a more pilgrim-centered

approach will cast serious doubts on any notions about pilgrims that are considered “institutionally unique.”

The above data, and conversations in the field, point to three potential categories of pilgrims whose activities remain ongoing. The first category would be individuals who travel the same route many times. For them, strong devotion to a single figure like Kūkai, or even faith in a single pilgrimage institution, is a genuine possibility. Some will tell you that they simply have no interest in other routes. Others will tell you that observing the same temples through the seasons and years makes it worthwhile. After all, in the case of Shikoku, 88 temples can seem to blur together with only a single visit to each. I have personally met a considerable number of pilgrims of this description. However, the scope of this research can neither confirm nor deny Sakuma-san’s assertion that this group is primarily motivated by a pursuit of practical benefits.

The second category we might consider would be people who seek out multiple venues devoted to the same figure. This selectivity can also be representative of specific devotion to a figure and/or deity. While pilgrim activities take place in a wide range of locations and is a primary religious practice, it is within a specific context. For instance, Rev. Mori, a Sōtō-Zen priest, and his father, actively pursue and guide their temple’s members on any number of Kannon pilgrim routes (*Mori* 9-4-04). Mori-sensei has traveled to 166 temples associated with Kannon, on both major and lesser-known circuits. For him, any Kannon route is a legitimate goal, but he does not have an interest in other types of pilgrimages.

The third group of multi-circuit pilgrims contains those who engage in a number of routes of different types. For them, all routes, big and small, old or new, have

legitimacy (though they seem to have their favorites). These pilgrims may have strong ties to Buddhist sects, such as Shingon, or they may even consider their pilgrim activities to be an adequate and exclusive expression of their religious faith.

Nakagawa-san may be representative of this last group⁵³⁵⁴ (Anonymous 10-4-04). He is a quite, friendly, chain-smoking pilgrim from Shizuoka. By his own admission, he is compulsively addicted to pilgrimaging. Recognizably a pilgrim, with a white shirt and pilgrim bag, he prays intently with his eyes closed before the central image of Chōsen-in (長泉院), in Chichibu. His prayers finished and temple signatures obtained, he sits down and casually enjoys a cigarette while his wife tours the temple grounds observing the spring blossoms. Nakagawa-san seems as comfortable in the temple setting as a man sitting in his own backyard. And well he should, he and his wife have visited hundreds of pilgrim temples by car in their completion of more than 18 pilgrim routes of every type, size, and description: Daishi-routes, Kannon, Jizō, Fūdō-myōō, routes dedicated to the 13 Buddhas, and routes of the Seven Gods of good fortune. Additionally, he has traversed some routes, such as the Chichibu Kannon, multiple times. While he admits that his faith is strong, he does not participate in other Buddhist activities outside of pilgrim travels. Nakagawa-san says he goes to pilgrim locations without any specific request in mind, just for its own sake. He talks about being a pilgrim and his religious faith, as casually as a man might talk about sports or fishing.

Not everyone continues on as a pilgrim. Some individuals will complete a pilgrim route with a specific request, only to return home and never consider themselves pilgrims again. Still for others, such as Mori-sensei or Nakagawa-san, pilgrimage can be

a major, if not exclusive, religious practice. In the next chapter, we will consider how attitudes and motivations can evolve with these continuing pilgrim experiences.

CHAPTER IV

PILGRIM WILL: MOTIVES AND THEIR EVOLUTION

The diversity of perspectives, represented by the Japanese Buddhist pilgrim, has caused us to reject the tendency to use institution-wide statements about the pilgrims themselves. However, as we have seen in our previous discussion, our respect for the individual, does not prevent us from grouping like minded individuals, who share a high degree of commonality. At times, individuals could even suggest majority viewpoints. But majority viewpoints are not universals and the anomalous individuals might be hugely significant at times.

Any number of criteria could be useful, when discussing groups of individual pilgrims that share a common characteristic. The means by which they travel seems a

critical factor in both experience and identity. We could have bus pilgrims, car pilgrims, motorcycle pilgrims, bicycle pilgrims, running pilgrims, walking pilgrims, and even helicopter pilgrims. We could consider pilgrims by virtue of their social status and thus have retired pilgrims, student pilgrims, and farmer pilgrims. Both of these classifications may have some usefulness in certain applications. From our perspective, we will maintain that it is the “why” of pilgrimage, which is one of the most descriptive and interesting points of pilgrim identity.

When asked if she had a specific aim for her pilgrimage, a woman in her fifties in Chichibu looked carefully at me and in a strong but friendly tone said, “Yes, I certainly do... (Anonymous 10-04-04).” She then turned around and walked away. This situation illustrates the fact that, while dealing with motives is an essential component of pilgrimage studies, it can be difficult at times. Like pilgrim identity, issues of motivation change and come and go entirely. Sometimes motives are decidedly black and other times nebulously gray. Pilgrims often have no single driving motive to point to.

For this woman, there could be any number of reasons why she is hesitant to continue the discussion. Pilgrim motives can stem from an individual’s deepest fears or gravest concerns. Topics, such as death, or serious illness, are rarely points of casual conversations, especially with strangers. Perhaps even more personal, motives could come from feelings of shame or guilt.

Practically speaking, the potentially personal nature of motives suggests that the context of the conversation can become important. In the case of this woman, she was in the company of two friends. While she was willing to admit she had an overall aim, maybe she just did not feel comfortable talking about it with an audience. Her response

was to not discuss it. Another person may have spoken with some reservations or sought to conceal things somehow. The burden is on the researcher to (1) ask questions in as ideal a situation as possible, (2) to recognize genuine reluctance, and (3) to identify particular variables, such as other people, which could affect the responses.

These difficulties notwithstanding, both people who deal with pilgrims on a practical level and on a scholarly level, eventually have to confront the “why” of their efforts. At the practical level, the pilgrim guide, Mayumi Sakuma, gives us an overview of pilgrim aims and motivations. Her approach is to consider central motives in the context of pilgrim means and age groups. She states:

Initial reasons [for pilgrimage] are really quite varied. It seems that for people, who are walking individually, there are many whose faith is strong, but there are also people, who at the end of the pilgrimage wish to discover something by themselves. Recently, there are people, who have lost their jobs due to company restructuring, and are pilgrimaging until they look for new work. Others are said to have the motivation to look back at their own lives up until now or to reflect on themselves. For the younger generation of pilgrims, if they start with the motive “to accomplish one thing,” then they will travel together with anyone in order to pilgrimage.

Considering those who use bus tours, there are plenty who are retired from a company, pensioners, and who can afford both the time and money. There are also people who previously could not start pilgrimaging, but can do now that they quit the company. Also others are people who pilgrimage to atone for sins they have committed in their past, [act as a] family memorial, [to aid] sickness,

those people who pray for their troubles to become better, even if these troubles are few. There are people who pilgrimage for their businesses to become prosperous and people who pilgrimage for [their] children's happiness.

Also with others, there are people who, at the beginning, have little piety and who go with the aim of a tourist. Anyway, motivations are of many types(Sakuma "Re: sorry").⁵⁵

These statements give a commendable overview of an entire range of primary motivations. She points to those whose motives are tied up with strong faith as well as those for whom faith is secondary. She believes there are some, who go simply because they have the means to do so, and others, who desire a specific benefit or outcome.

With Sakuma-san's statements, along with other points of view we have already considered, it is easy to see many who directly associate certain motivations and the means by which they travel. However, I would recommend some caution when applying these associations too strongly. For example, in regard to her comments, I have met walking pilgrims who had little sense of piety, and bus pilgrims who could be described as devote. Additionally, it is not uncommon for people to use a variety of means to accomplish a single route or to switch means on subsequent routes. Some pilgrim routes, such as the Chichibu Kannon route, lend themselves very well to foot travel. Other routes, such as regional ones less than 30 years old, may have never been completed by a walking pilgrim. There is another contingent of people who start with pilgrim tours to learn the basics, and then cultivate their own independent travel by car, public transportation, or walking.

As shown here, although pilgrims may have multiple motivations, for those who have specific motives, it is usually possible to understand what constitutes a central motive. Secondary motives are significant and with time can even become primary motives. Some pilgrims seem to believe that concentrated effort for a single aim is best, while others maintain multiple aims of which one may shine through as the most central.

Above all, motives are not static. As discussed briefly above, these motives seem to have changed throughout history. The itinerant, homeless, alms-seeking pilgrims of the Edo period, who were caught in deep poverty, have vanished from the landscape. Similarly, pilgrims from history might have had difficulty understanding modern pilgrims who are motivated by worry about daughters who refuse to marry, or about sons who are shut-ins, obsessed with playing video games.

It is also important to consider the genuine existence of Central Motive-independent pilgrims. As with the case of Nakagawa-san above, a significant number of people deny having central or even peripheral motives. Motiveless-pilgrims tend to be either beginners or highly seasoned pilgrim veterans.

Before we launch into a discussion of how pilgrim motives evolve over time, we shall look more closely at those whom, at a moment in time, might be considered Motive-holding pilgrims and Central Motive-independent pilgrims. Within these two broad categories it is possible to find similitude among a number of individuals.

Motive-holding Pilgrims

“Well-being” seeking pilgrims

It might be said that a significant number of pilgrims are pursuing an aim that provides themselves and/or others with a sense of well-being. In the above example of Inoue-san, we saw a woman who was more uneasy than desperate. If granted, her divine request would provide both her and her daughters with an intangible, immaterial, sense of well-being. In a sense, the aims of pilgrims of this description are quite reasonable. These aims include many issues related with death: preparation for one's own death which may be close, but not immanent, a memorial for a deceased loved one, or a memorial for a stillborn child or aborted fetus.

Nakashima-san seems representative of pilgrims primarily motivated by a sense of well-being (Anonymous 17-3-04)⁵⁶. Nakashima-san, who is in her mid-fifties, and her mother, in her eighties, both live in the southern part of Osaka.⁵⁷ Temple number 12, Shōhō-ji (正法寺) of the Saigoku pilgrim route, is a mountaintop temple that is difficult to reach by public transportation. The three of us are conversing while riding a special, once-a-month, Japan Railways bus that allows ease of access for temple visitors on the 17th of each month. "I am doing it for the oizuri!" she explains without hesitation (Anonymous 17-3-04). While speaking, Nakashima-san opens a box and shows me the white vest, which is covered with Saigoku temple stamps and signatures. Her mother is a long time pilgrim who has previously completed both the Saigoku and Shikoku routes with her deceased husband. Her sister had passed away some years earlier and her corpse was wrapped in her mother's oizuri. Nakashima-san was now creating her own funeral garment with the oizuri she was showing me. Though she currently seems both healthy and happy, perhaps with the loss of her father and sister, she displays a clear sense of death's inevitability.

Nakashima-san's mother requires a helpful arm to lean on while getting in and out of the bus, or while walking over uneven ground (Anonymous 17-3-04). She quickly produces pictures of her deceased daughter and husband, showing them to me. Wearing white, she and her husband traveled by car to the 33 places of Saigoku and the 88 places of Shikoku (the latter requiring 11 separate trips). She explains that she has long since forgotten what each place looks like, so she is glad to accompany her daughter. Though her lost family members are clearly on her mind, she says that she has no particular reason for coming.

Nakashima-san has pilgrim aspirations well beyond the Saigoku route. She is currently being inspired to travel to Shikoku due to a book she is reading. The 100 temple Kannon journey, which combines the temples of Saigoku, Chichibu, and Bandō, is also a future goal. She admits, under her breath, that she does not think her mother will be able to go on these trips. As such, she may try to walk in some places, especially in Chichibu. When I enquire about her family's Buddhist sect, her friendly eyes turn from me to the bus floor, and she laughs nervously. She explains that they are of the Jōdō-shin sect, but that she does not really know anything about sectarian Buddhism.

Nakashima-san's aim is not merely the materialist goal of a certified pilgrim shirt. She obviously feels a certain tugging caused by her own mortality. While the existential experience of human mortality is nearly universal with the passing of years, it is rare in modern society to encounter someone with their own funeral garment in a purse on their lap. Nakashima-san maintains a lighthearted demeanor while making preparations for life's most confounding experience.

Troubled Pilgrims

Greater human difficulties than those found with the *well-being seeking pilgrim* plague the *troubled pilgrim*. Problems and prayer requests that are fairly grave and urgent are the norm. Most obviously, one still encounters seriously ill people on the pilgrim trail, as well as those pilgrims traveling for the benefit of the seriously ill. Historically, the anonymous graves in Shikoku marked simply “Ohenro-san” (pilgrim) point to those cure-seekers whose dreams were unrealized.

Motives pertaining to material benefits, or memorials for the dead could fall into either of these first two categories, depending on the severity of the situation. Therefore, someone praying for their families continued happiness might well consider financial security a crucial part of the picture, while another pilgrim, who has recently come to financial ruin, has a much greater sense of need and urgency. Kuyō, or memorials for the dead, could also be more or less urgent or weighty, based on the pilgrim’s relationship to the deceased and the cause death. For instance, a kuyō for an aborted fetus could be personally more compelling than one for a grandparent⁵⁸.

Among the ranks of the *troubled pilgrim*, there seems to be those who are visibly troubled, but who maintain a high degree of secrecy and/or privacy about what they are doing. They stand in contrast to the average pilgrim who is fairly social and lighthearted. These *secret pilgrims*, do specifically seek out pilgrim locations and may use pilgrim accouterment, such as stamp books or scrolls, but are loath to talk about being a pilgrim or why they are there.

A uniquely contemporary example of the *troubled pilgrim* can be found in a recent campaign to rehabilitate shut-ins through pilgrim activities. Japan has been

plagued by a recent upsurge in the number of “hikikomori” or individuals who refuse to leave their homes. Sometimes described as Japan’s “lost generation,” those suffering from this condition are believed to number more than one million, and are poorly provided for by Japan’s health care system (Nakai). Jun Sakaguchi, an avid pilgrim, a former hikikomori, and the founder of a non-profit organization called *New Start* describes his situation. He states, “I thought I was no good unless I did everything perfectly. I knew I couldn’t do anything if I became a recluse. But all I did was walk around my room (Nakai).” Sakaguchi spent more than five and a half years in seclusion only venturing out at night to go to a convenience store. For the last two years, his organization *New Start* has sought to rehabilitate hikikomori through pilgrimage. Dressed in traditional pilgrim clothes, the participants walk the more than 1400-Km of the Shikoku pilgrim route. The pilgrims have some associations with the archetypal figure of Kūkai, whom they describe as a type of hikikomori, owing to his frequent tendency to disappear alone in the mountains or hunker down in a cave (Nakai). The program brochure states:

Walking among the rich nature of Shikoku will revive their bodies, and the osettai (pilgrim alms) will revive their spirits. The pilgrimage is a kind of hospital that offers the best kind of counseling (Nakai).

The program has enjoyed considerable success and it offers hope for those suffering from a nation-wide problem.

As this examples clearly shows, we can distinctly notice therapeutic benefits that are possible both for the *well-being seeking pilgrim* and the *troubled pilgrim*. These therapeutic benefits can be motives in themselves, as with the hikikomori, or can be a

byproduct of pilgrim behavior centered on something else. Even if their efforts fail, people are generally comforted by the ability to do something about their situation. The most troubled of pilgrims can have a relatively lighthearted demeanor on the pilgrim trail.

Thanksgiving Pilgrim

A *troubled pilgrim*, whose request is believed to have been granted, may become a *thanksgiving pilgrim*. Additionally, *thanksgiving pilgrims* may have received a blessing outside of the context of pilgrim activities. They then become a pilgrim with the specific motive to give thanks. With the *thanksgiving pilgrim*, there is the potential for very personal and specific associations with a religious figure or deity, who was directly implored for their request. Clearly a minority but a visible contingent, the *thanksgiving pilgrims* are very likely to become avid and faithful pilgrims.

Shugyō pilgrims

Many pilgrims seem to associate their activities, to a greater or lesser degree, with Buddhist ascetic practice. *Shugyō pilgrims* are those who pilgrimage motivated by the belief that their personal efforts can bring about enlightenment or higher states of consciousness. As with Roberto and Claudia Garcia above, there are minorities of pilgrims who associate Buddhism, primarily with self-actualization. Foreign pilgrims seem to swell the ranks of the *shugyō pilgrims*. If one's predisposition is to seek enlightenment, one can find ample precedent in the pilgrim archetypes and in sectarian literature. Among pilgrims with a specific motive, *shugyō pilgrims* may even represent a bit of elitism.

Self-actualizing religious practices are typically associated with discomfort and challenges, both physical and mental. In Japan, this would include walking, running, bivouacking or camping⁵⁹, seated meditation, lengthy and/or frequent repetition of Buddhist texts, mantras, dharanis, or prayers. As we saw with the old woman on the stairs above, unstructured hardships are often considered equally conducive to religious development or accumulated blessings.

Amy Chavez is a great example of a *shugyō pilgrim*.⁶⁰ Mrs. Chavez, an American expatriate and an 11-year resident of Japan, lives with her husband on Shirashi Island in the Seto inland-sea (Chavez “Answers”). The 41-year-old freelance writer produces material for books, magazines, and newspapers and owns her own company which designs bedding for children and hotels. Her weekly column “Japan Lite,” in the Saturday issue of the Japan Times, entertains expatriates with idiosyncratic tales of Japanese people and foreign life in Japan. Though raised a Catholic in Ohio, she now says she prays to all deities: God, Allah, Buddha, whomever.

After five years of teaching English at Okayama University, Mrs. Chavez was suddenly and unexpectedly let go (Chavez “Book Excerpts”). The situation brought home the isolation that many long-term foreign residents feel, especially after they have developed considerable Japanese language skills. The university had denied her legal rights that Japanese employees would enjoy, and the manner of her dismissal made her feel “second-class.” Shaken in her confidence in Japanese people, she sought the advice of a local Buddhist priest and friend. After deliberating on her situation, he recommended that she travel to the 88 temples of Shikoku.

With an eye on enlightenment and a desire to find the “heart” of the Japanese, she set out, not to walk, but to run the pilgrim circuit. Mrs. Chavez explains that from the outset, she considered herself a pilgrim and that everyone else, pilgrims and non-pilgrims alike, considered her one as well. She prayed intently at each pilgrim temple and chanted the Heart Sutra. She wore a pilgrim shirt and carried a scroll for temple insignia, but forwent pants, walking staff, and other items that were not practical for running.

Like the anonymous pilgrim above, she found her idealistic images about pilgrimage confronting practical and institutional realities. She explains her frustration at being denied temple-lodging saying:

The pilgrimage is supposed to be about enlightenment. True pilgrims who walk it because they want to experience it as closely as the Kobo Daishi did, should be encouraged-not turned away at the temple doors. Kobo Daishi’s statue is everywhere. Surely he depended on the good will of others.

But I am often turned away. As a walking pilgrim, I suffer more hardships and it is humiliating to be turned away at temple doors. How can they turn enlightenment-seekers away? Is the pilgrimage just another commercial project of Buddhism? You trudge around to these temples and give a donation to each, just to be turned away when you need space on the floor. I think that Kobo Daishi would tell the modern pilgrim: “take a bus” (Chavez “Book Excerpts”).

The above statements express that enlightenment-seekers, or “true pilgrims,” undoubtedly should be encouraged. Her stance is fairly reasonable given the example of Kōbō Daishi and his insistence that enlightenment is the apogee of Buddhism. Fortunately, the lack of hospitality displayed by some temples is greatly compensated by

the overwhelming kindness of the local population. In terms of nourishment, she is nearly sustained by gifts from locals and other pilgrims.

Amy Chavez, the running, foreign pilgrim, became a TV celebrity. Reports on her progress were issued once a week for six weeks during her time in Shikoku. Now genuinely enthusiastic about pilgrim travel, she is planning a trip to the 33 Kannon temples in Hokkaido by horse!

Mrs. Chavez equates the identity of a pilgrim with the search for enlightenment. By running on average 40Km per day, and by not reserving her sleeping arrangements (as most do), she has introduced certain ascetic elements into her journey that demonstrate genuine personal effort. Secondly, she seeks to better understand Japanese people after an unpleasant situation. She feels total acceptance as a pilgrim, while in the context of five years of work, she remained an outsider. Other foreign pilgrims I spoke with have expressed similar acceptance as pilgrims, perhaps due in part to the fact that most walk. If her approach is somewhat idealistic, it is an idealism that most pilgrims and local people are rather sympathetic to (even if temple priests are not). As seen in the media coverage she received, *shugyō pilgrims* are like the heroes of the pilgrim landscape.

Enabling Pilgrims

In our above discussion of “pilgrims by association” we eluded to the existence of the *enabling pilgrim*. Like in the case of Nakashima-san, aiding a fellow pilgrim is often a secondary motive. But there are a handful of people who, while they call themselves pilgrims, presumably would not be traveling to pilgrim locations if they were not caring for a grandparent, parent, disabled spouse, or friend. Pilgrim proxies and professional

pilgrim guides could also be described as *enabling pilgrims*. Like any pilgrim, *enabling pilgrims* may experience a metamorphosis of their pilgrim identity, which correspondingly, may shift or multiply their motivations.

Central Motive-Independent Pilgrims

Motive-Independent pilgrims are unable to articulate a certain aim for their pilgrim identity and/or activities. A single central motive can be so critical to some pilgrims, but for others, the travel continues without reliance on a single driving force. It is not that these individuals are “motive-less” per se, because there may be any number of reasons to go, they are just not driven by a single conviction.

Specifically, we can see a range of individuals we might call Motive-Independent. For some, the opportunities of pilgrim travel presented itself, so they just decided to go. Others, who are inspired by a desire to become pilgrims, find that goal rather easy to realize and are left simply to carry on. Some have had very specific motives, as those seen above, only to have these motives dissolve, for any number of reasons over time. Finally, there are beginners who are rather vague about their faith, but confident that they are pilgrims. Such individuals are far less likely to have a specific request for a deity or figure to which they do not understand their relationship.

Why-not Pilgrims

For some the question is not so much “why become a pilgrim?” as much as it is “why-not?” A dozen minor reasons can be nearly as compelling as a single central

motive. Many people display the simple outlook that becoming a pilgrim is simply a good idea.

Speaking to a pilgrim in her fifties, at the peak of the beloved cherry blossoms in Chichibu, I ask her why she has come (Anonymous #1 9-03-04).⁶¹ She then laughs out loud as if to say “you are joking right?” For my benefit, she explains that compared with Tokyo, it is like the Pure Land here in Chichibu. She then illustrates herself by pointing out the beauty of the temple: the Edo-era Kannon hall, the blooming trees, and the Sakura-no-fubuki, or cherry blossoms that fall like snow, with the warm, clean, mountain breeze. “All of this is healing,” she explains candidly (Anonymous #1 9-03-04). None of these things taken singularly, the cherry trees, the old temples, or the opportunity to pray to Kannon might have compelled this woman to come. But all of these things taken collectively can make a very good case indeed.

This view can represent a number of people who are fairly new to the business of pilgrimage. Thus, it is not difficult to imagine some calamity, which might befall a *why-not pilgrim* that might provide her with a very specific motive for carrying on.

Ongoing Pilgrims

In regard to academia, ancient Greeks used to distinguish between those who learn for the sake of something else, like in order to master a trade, and those who learn simply for knowledge’s sake. The latter was considered to be more sophisticated. Among the Buddhist pilgrims in Japan, there seem to be those who go about seeking specific benefits, and those who carry on pilgrim activities, over a considerable length of time, and for its own sake.

As discussed above, this significant category of pilgrims partakes in pilgrim activities as a primary (if not exclusive) and ongoing religious practice. For them, being a pilgrim does not end with the last temple of a circuit, but is a lifestyle. Almost all pilgrims of this description have an evangelical attitude that encourages others to come along. Furthermore, they are frequently volunteers for pilgrimage organizations.

Ongoing pilgrims are comfortable being pilgrims. They can wear the identity as easily as a white oizuri and may well take it to their graves. *Ongoing pilgrims* represent a wide cross section of social classes, ages, and familial sectarian associations. Future research may show that these pilgrims' influence is disproportionate to their actual numbers. This group includes continuing pilgrims on the same route, pilgrims of multiple routes of the same type, and those for whom almost any route of any type is attractive.

Time and experience has caused these individuals to move past burning motives to a point where they continue on for its own sake. For most pilgrims, this is a relatively advanced state of development. *Ongoing pilgrims* could have begun pilgrimaging with the motivations of any of the other types of pilgrims we have discussed. In the next section, we will consider how this development takes places and will hear specific voices that articulate this evolution.

The Evolution of Pilgrim Motives

The dynamic nature of pilgrim identity is perhaps most clearly seen by considering pilgrim motives over time. Without overwhelming ethnographic data to support these statements conclusively, let me suggest what types of changes may be commonplace. *Well-being pilgrims* may become fairly confident in their own

preparations for death. The cycles of family life resolves certain family related requests. Sons and daughters marry or move out of the house. A new generation can change the family structure completely. The drive to memorialize deceased ancestors can diminish over time. A *well-being pilgrim's* own sense of effort can have a calming, therapeutic effect.

Troubled pilgrims may have some situational resolution, be it good or bad. Some may believe that they have been granted miraculous cures for illness. This almost ensures continued devotion as a pilgrim. A large percentage of the *hikikomori* who finish the long trek in Shikoku have become re-socialized. Businesses can succeed or fail. Material benefits that at one time seemed essential, later become passé.

Enabling pilgrims can lose their partners and begin traveling with others or by themselves. *Thanksgiving pilgrims* can become hooked on pilgrim travel. *Shugyō pilgrims* may eventually have a specific request or might discover a non-duality, which shuns enlightenment-seeking. *Why-not pilgrims* can begin to find reasons to go when the pilgrim trail becomes less idyllic or when life produces difficulties. Even, *ongoing pilgrims* may suddenly have a pressing situation that may cause them to again seek certain aims.

As the means of pilgrim travel change, there might be a resulting affect on motives. As we have discussed, some move from motorized transit to walking, or vice versa. As a result, the activity itself may seem more or less like a form of ascetic practice. Paying money to go on a tour may lead some to “get their money’s worth” by seeking specific requests. When those same people switch to public transit, their attitude can be less driven in the context of a more leisurely pace.

The actual progression of motives may take place in any number of sequences, but some may be more commonplace than others. We could even widen our look at motives to consider pre-pilgrim areas as well. The following sequences in **Figure A** show six possible progressions, in what might be an infinite number of possibilities. Sequence number one is illustrated by a specific example below. The remaining five sequences are not conclusively supported by research data contained here and await further research to either confirm or deny such progressions. The sequences are structures with respect to what are roughly called early, middle, and later periods of time. These time periods are relative to the individuals. For instance, with a walking pilgrim in Shikoku, the middle or late periods could be merely weeks after beginning, while for others it could be years.

Figure A: Possible Sequences in Changing Motives

EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE
1.) Specific Motive i.e. Troubled Pilgrim→ → →Thanksgiving Motive → → → Pilgrim Action for its own sake		
2.)”Why-not” (central motive-less)→ → →Specific Motive (troubled, well being, etc)→ P. A. for its own sake		
3.) Enabling Motive → → → → → → →Specific Motive → → → → → Pilgrim Action for its own sake		
4.) Specific Motive (troubled, well being, etc)→ P.A. for its own sake→ → Specific Motive (onset of difficulties)		
5.) Non-pilgrim Circumambulation→ → →”Why-not” with pilgrim identity→ → → → →Specific Motive		
6.) Non-pilgrim Circumambulation→ → →Specific Motive with pilgrim identity→ → →P.A. for its own sake		

Pilgrim Voices on Changing Motives

Motive evolution can be best illustrated with the examples of several pilgrims. Enbutsu Sumiko, the author of a pilgrim guidebook for the 34 temples of Chichibu, describes an encounter with a pilgrim while walking between temples. The conversation details how the pilgrim's motives changed significantly over the course of five complete circuits. It seems to fit best with sequence #1 above. She writes:

I recall a sturdy middle-aged man and his wife I met while walking in this area. The man told me it was his third pilgrimage in Chichibu, his fifth if two earlier rounds by car were included. He explained that his first pilgrimage was undertaken for the benefit of an employee of his small company in Tokyo, who was found to have cancer. In a hurry to relieve the patient of immanent death, he made a cursory pilgrimage by car to pray for the Cannon's [sic] blessing. When the employee miraculously recovered, the man felt obliged to make a thanksgiving pilgrimage, which he also did by car. While driving from one temple to another, however, he felt a strong sensation that something was very wrong, although he couldn't say exactly what. He decided that he had better make a pilgrimage on foot, after which his feelings of foreboding disappeared, [sic] "Now, I'm addicted to pilgrimage," he said. "I'm on the road almost every weekend, often with my wife and sometimes the children, too (Enbutsu 74-75)."

This man demonstrates very clear motives for his first two circumnavigations: a specific prayer request (of the *troubled pilgrim* variety) and a desire to give thanks. Having switched his means of travel, he gains an increased sense of comfort. Although not explicitly stated, it seems that his continued pilgrim activities are not driven by a specific

motive, as before. I have encountered many people who display this strongly discernable compulsion for pilgrim travel⁶².

The pilgrim motives in this passage have a similar sequence to a pilgrim couple I met in Chichibu (Anonymous #2 9-4-04).⁶³ This middle-aged couple from Tokyo explained that they initially started the route because the husband had become sick. They proceeded traveling on the weekends when they could. The man recovered from his illness and they told me that now they would like to carry on as a means of thanksgiving. They doubted that their pilgrim experiences would end when this first circuit was completed. As with many who believe they have received a gracious benefit, it seems that in all likelihood they were destined to continue for a long time.

An 80-year-old man surveyed by Waseda University researchers in Chichibu uses the free-response section of his questionnaire to impart what he feels are the fundamental conclusions arrived at, after years of pilgrimage. His words read almost as a lecture or sermon for those whose viewpoints have not yet matured. He writes:

Pilgrimage is not a competition for how many times you can go, faith must be decided on as something directed inward, it is not something outside which you are boastful of! Benefits are something, which result from the close relationship of the Buddha's compassion and the sincerity of sentient beings. Owing to the way I hold my own heart, benefits have become useless. Concerning benefits, they could be a trap within a person's own heart. If I state my inclination, faith's origin is not based on requesting, seeking, or desiring. This is the conclusion that has been arrived at by an old man with 18 years of pilgrimage experience (Junrei no Michi 211).

The man is clearly concerned that a pilgrim's efforts might be misdirected towards both impressing others and seeking benefits. In fact, seeking benefits seems to be an obstacle that people should avoid altogether. It also seems clear that this conclusion came from experience. Perhaps, he had sought specific benefits himself or had contact with many others who had prayer requests.

While examination of motives is not always a black and white affair, we can often discern some specificity and similitude. With the passage of time and continued pilgrim travel, motives can become more dynamic or can pass away completely. Pilgrim travel is not effortless, and motives can sustain people through the difficult parts. In the above voices, we hear pilgrims both articulate their own motives and even express specific opinions about pilgrimage motivations in general. Whether it is the enlightenment-seeker as a "true pilgrim," or the benefit-seeker as a sort of "false pilgrim," the topic is important enough to stimulate thought and even emotion.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The above discussions have sought to demonstrate that pilgrimage study in Japan requires the inclusion of factors of individual experience in our primary considerations. The relativity of these individual factors suggests certain contingents in our overall notions of pilgrimage. Perhaps due in part to this relativity, previous pilgrimage research has either concentrated on the more consistent aspects of institutions or even suggested commonality, where there is in fact diversity. We cannot suppose that either institutional structures, or individual structures, have an investigational priority. If we do so, we will always have pilgrims or pilgrimage structures that will be exceedingly difficult to describe.

If we prudently choose to describe pilgrimage with respect to factors of individual experience, then we must clearly articulate exactly with whom it is we are concerned.

Discerning who is a pilgrim is perhaps the most essential (if not controversial) aspect of this paradigm. It seems best to maintain a distinction between pilgrims and non-pilgrim religious travelers. It is also advantageous to avoid the tendency to define pilgrims in a specific institutional context or based on participation in certain institutional structures. Doing so limits our ability to dialogue with researchers of other pilgrimages of the world. I have maintained that people, who are properly called pilgrims, recognize themselves to be such, regardless of the source of that identity.

The inclusion of individual factors of experience, such as issues of identity and motives, has lead us to a handful of conclusions about the contemporary Buddhist pilgrimage in Japan. One fundamental conclusion is that we can see degrees of both adherence to and separation from formal institutional structures and practices. From the moment interest in pilgrimage or pilgrims is first aroused, the free will of pilgrims determines how the activities and beliefs take shape. We have seen that pilgrims are not only enticed by advertisements or pilgrimage guidebooks, but also by interpersonal interaction with other pilgrims, or by an affinity for a pilgrim archetype. These archetypes often typify liminal pilgrim behavior. Therefore, their very example suggests personal latitude in pilgrim activities. On the other hand, some pilgrims continue their activities for years at a time, while participating only in tightly controlled, institutionally sanctioned groups, which attempt to standardize everything, from pilgrim dress, to temple rituals. In between, we have perhaps the majority of pilgrims who operate within formal structures, but with personal interpretations.

We have considered several key examples, which demonstrate this diversity of interpretations. We have looked at how a pilgrim's identity and activities stand in

relationship to their own Buddhist sectarian associations. For some, pilgrimage is a rather orthodox religious practice, encouraged by their Buddhist sect. For others, the practice of pilgrimage has almost no association with their family's Buddhist sect. For still others, pilgrimage seems to represent an exclusive religious practice that functions as a freestanding belief structure. The character and function of the central image of a given pilgrimage is similarly subject to wide ranging interpretations. Additionally, issues such as "self-power," "other-power," and ascetic practice are approachable only through careful solicitation of individuals.

Despite this range of interpretations, both pilgrims and the myriad institutions within pilgrimage seem to exist in relative harmony to one another. Differing approaches in the context of Japanese Buddhist pilgrimages appear to be largely tolerated. However, this tolerance does not necessarily indicate equality among pilgrims. Hierarchies among pilgrims are discernable in a number of contexts.

Consideration of pilgrim motives, while not without difficulties, is a rather crucial aspect of contemporary pilgrimage study. As we have seen, nearly every major topic concerning pilgrims can hinge somehow on these motives. Numerous and wide ranging examples of motives are held by Buddhist pilgrims in Japan, and these motives can change or cease to exist altogether.

Pilgrims, and subsequently pilgrimage, in Japan are best considered within a timeframe rather than at a single point in time. The continuing nature of pilgrim travel has a profound effect on all of the major topics we have discussed: experience, identity, approaches, beliefs, and motives. We can conclude that the relative aspects of pilgrimage are not simply a function of differing views held by various individuals, but that many

aspects of pilgrimage can change for a single individual over a period of time. Our ability to study Buddhist pilgrimage in Japan is entirely contingent on our ability to accommodate and describe this relativity.

APPENDIX A

The following translated materials are specific instructions and explanations compiled by the Chugoku Kannon Pilgrimage Association and made available to pilgrims of via their web page.

From <http://www.kannon.org/junpai.html> (9 April 2003):

Consider Your First Pilgrimage to be Lighthearted

Prayers to your ancestors and “religious training” for contemporary living...

As well as, preparatory training for the next life...

This is pilgrimage

Pilgrimage ‘s appearance is that of white garments with the pilgrim’s shoulder bag, gaiters with straw sandals, a grass hat with a walking stick, holding offerings of light and incense sticks...

These things are gratitude for one’s ancestors, for those departed ones who have already left us. And, they are also the appearances of an ascetic practitioner who reflects on their own way of living. Separating yourself from all wants, with meekness you look honestly

at the manifestation of your own concentrated purification. At the same time, these things are also preparations for one's own journey of death. From within the life that you are living now, you offer a prayer for your past, you come to accept death, and think about the appearance of the next world.

All of us, from the time of our birth onwards, have had our bodies placed in the realm of egotistical, earthly desires...At the end of a very short life, when we stare at death, which everyone must surmount, our minds become resolved. This is certainly the importance of the present and of the prayer for one's past.

When we can't do it on our own, there is Kannon.

When we are ashamed, there is Kannon.

When we are distressed, there is Kannon.

We see ourselves and know the universe.

We see the universe and know ourselves.

We see the appearance of the next life. We know the present and we know the next life.

We have a sense of now, this very moment (今の今). We have a sense of the past and of the next life.

We are in the hand of Kannon...

From <http://www.kannon.org/chui.html> (9 April 2003):

Instructions for each pilgrimage site

- 1.) Rinse your mouth, wash your hands, cleanse your body and stand before the central image.

- 2.) The pilgrim stamp (Concerning the pilgrim stamp, it is often the case that it is collectively obtained by a merchant or representative) and sutra chanting are certainly the most important matters. Maintaining your undivided attention, the sutras are chanted.
- 3.) Pertaining to incense and candles, individual offerings of these may be made as the occasion calls for it, but since there are temples with many important cultural properties, fire management requires sufficient caution. (bear this in mind with cigarettes, etcetera)
- 4.) A pilgrim should neither throw or scatter money or rice offerings from a distance. These items should only be placed in the prescribed box.
- 5.) Concerning pilgrimage locations where Kannon is not the central image, that specific central image must necessarily be worshiped.
- 6.) Along the way, even if you are in a hurry, sufficient time inside the temple must be taken for sutra chanting, etcetera.
- 7.) In regard to your temple visit, you should find out the pilgrimage temple's opening and closing times in advance. Do not pilgrimage too early in the morning or too late at night.
- 8.) As for washed rice and rice bowls, it should be subdivided in advance into handful sized portions in plastic bags. Making an offering with these plastic bags is acceptable.
- 9.) In regard to the pilgrim's "Ofuda" and sutra related postings, carefully ask the temple attendant [where is a good place]. Do not place them just anywhere.

10.)At the temple or on the roadside, local people frequently give offerings to the pilgrims, but you should recognize your own ascetic practice. You should include some thankful expressions of gratitude by giving alms of a small sum of money and by not forgetting to speak words of gratitude.

Sample Question and Answer from <http://www.kannon.org/qa1.html>:

Q.) When performing a Kannon pilgrimage, I can often see the wearing of a white “happi-style” of clothes, but must I wear this? (Tottori-city, business man, 49 years old)

A.)Nowadays, even “easy to move in” garments are fine. Originally, the white happi, what is called an oizuru or oizuri, was worn at the time of the pilgrimage. The significance is discussed below.

Tokudō-shonin and Hanayama-hō-ō, who started the Kannon pilgrimage, carried with them a Kanzeon image. A pure white robe was worn to avoid defiling the box that contained this image by touching the worldly body. This became a pilgrim tradition. Nowadays, the pilgrim receives the temple stamp on the oizuri and it is said that after passing on, the pilgrim is saved by Honorable Kannon.

APPENDIX B

The following is a translation of an introduction to a pilgrim guidebook, The Kannon Journey (観音の旅).

Life is a Journey

Also, within a journey is the epitome of one's life

One makes a journey with a wish and in pursuit of Kannon

The Chugoku Kannon Reijo

As it is said that life can be identified as one's journey, also within one's journey is also the epitome of life. From old times, people have been fond of journeys.

Pilgrimage history is old. Pilgrims make a journey with a wish and in pursuit of the Buddha. At the pilgrim temples, he/she recites sutras and chants Buddhist hymns. And then on the way to the next pilgrim temple, there is an interaction with the local people. There might be times, on the pilgrim trail where one might also meet the Buddha.

Within pilgrimage, which can said to be beyond mundane life, the epitome of life is condensed.

In general, modern people are very busy. Almost all pilgrims continue to journey by means such as their personal car or bus and with vague ideas and in a uniform way. Naturally, even when they go to the pilgrim temple, perhaps pilgrims are unaware of the merit they receive or even what they should see within the temple. The connection to the local area fades. Whichever region you go to, the meals are much the same. The pilgrims complete the temple circuit, but what remains are only such things as hanging scrolls and the pilgrim's stamp book. There is no recollection of which temples they visited. However, one cannot laugh at this. This reality of the hurried pilgrim is a fact. With this, the pilgrimage's original significance fades, and one is forced to make a journey without deep significance. This writing is intended to fill this gap (in significance).

The Chugoku Kannon Reijo makes the pilgrim go around the Chugoku area's five prefectures with a 1500 kilometer string which has 37 knots attached. The string is one's way from temple to temple and the knots are the temples themselves. Each temple has miraculous efficacy and merit proven by a long history. In the Sanyo and Sanin, the climates are different. This is just like life which has its large ups and downs.

Apart from these aforementioned unique qualities of this pilgrimage association, another point which characterizes this pilgrimage is an exchange with China's Mt. Fuda. This connection will be mentioned in full detail elsewhere in this text. Egakudashi, who finally came home from Mt. Fuda, and the Kannon image, which he wished to take home but could not, was eventually received. These images are an offering to the many

predecessors who attempted the voyage to Mt. Fuda but were drowned at sea. I pray that the Kannon images that were distributed from Mt. Fuda to each temple come to be received and that the pilgrim's merits will be multiplied [by each of the 37 locations].

APPENDIX C

As another voice in our discussion of specific pilgrimage terms, the following translations from Japanese represent Shiraki Toshiyuki's (白木利幸) definitions of key pilgrim terms in his book Pilgrimage-Temple Worship Terms Dictionary (巡礼参拝用語辞典).

本巡礼-ほんじゅんれい p. 121

Honjunrei are the pilgrimage courses which have become the objects of worship of the utsushi pilgrimages. Actually, honrunrei are the pilgrimage courses which collected the difficult, enormous, and plentiful pilgrimages. Chiefly, the 33 places of Saikoku, the 33 places of Bandō, the 34 places of Chichibu, and the 88 places of Shikoku have become honjunrei. Besides these, there are founder-pilgrimage aspects such as the 25 places of Enkō-Daishi (Hōnen), and the 24 companions of Shinran-shōnin. Among these and other

pilgrimages, such as the 33 places of Mogami or the 33 places of Izumo, we can regard some to be utsushi pilgrimages. Therefore, we can call these others hon-junrei.

本尊巡礼　ほんぞんじゅんれい　p。121

Honzon junrei are the pilgrimage courses, which regard a certain esteemed character as the pilgrimage's central image. Various esteemed characters, such as Jizo Bosatsu, Fudō-myō-ō (Dharma King), Amida Nyōrai, Yakushi Nyōrai, Aizen-myō-ō, Monju Bosatsu, Daikokuten, Benzaiten, and Shōten became these objects of veneration. Especially recently, enormous Fudō-myōō and Yakushi pilgrimages have begun. These honzon pilgrimages have been originating one after the other. Kannon pilgrimage is also conceivable as kind of honzon pilgrimage. Additionally, in the case of Daishi pilgrimage, Kōbō Daishi already stands as a well regarded, esteemed character. Therefore, Daishi pilgrimage is not a founder pilgrimage. We can think of honzon pilgrimage with regard to Kōbō Daishi as a honzon of pilgrim sites. It is often the case that the number of pilgrim locations stems from certain religious associations with these esteemed characters that have the equivalent number.

霊場-れいじょう　p。134

A reijo is a place where a miracle has appeared. From old times, places that became the object of veneration of reclusive soul's faith and the so-called "hijiri residence" (a place where hijiri lived) were regarded as reijō. Because, in these places, the same esteemed characters are enshrined and so on, these matters were selected with fixed conditions, and this country's pilgrimages were established. Furthermore, the

pilgrimage locations and the pilgrimage courses are also called reijō. Due to the fact that neighboring village temples and other related structures are selected, this transformation of certain sites into reijō is still continuing.

巡礼 じゅんれい p. 66

Junrei is the traveling about between a number of holy sites (or spiritual sites) and also that person who does this traveling. In all of the world's religions, pilgrimages exist. In India in the third century C.E., King Ashoka erected Buddhist images and stone pillars for pilgrimage. In China, pilgrimage locations, such as Mt. Godai, Mt. Gabi, Mt Kyūka, and Mt. Hoda, prospered. In this country, the first use of the term "junrei" was with the Heian period author Ennin's use of the term "nitsubō-junrei-kōki."

In regard to pilgrimages in every part of the world, there are pilgrimage locations which have become central and, even walking pilgrimages in which one travels toward these sacred places. Activities, such as this, have become commonplace. But even in regard to pilgrimage in our country, the number of fixed, religiously determined holy sites is limited. Moreover, there is a uniqueness, which is spoken about the affixing of a number to holy sites. With the certain order of these numbers, on account of traveling about to these sacred places (pilgrim locations), the character ^{じゅんれい}「順礼」 is also written.

With the rough classification of pilgrimage, there has become "honzon-junrei" and "sōshijunrei." However, in greater detail, these can be subdivided into eight varieties: Kannon junrei, Daishi junrei, Honzon junrei, Sōshijunrei, Jusan-butsu junrei, Junishijunrei, and the Shichifukujin. Legend has it, that the beginnings of junrei were with

the 33 places of Tsukushi (modern day Kyushu Saikoku Kannon pilgrimage). This is said to date back to the Nara period. However, historical evidence for this is somewhat problematic. After this, the Kannon pilgrimage, which was called the 33 places of Saikoku and was centered on the five capitol provinces around Kyoto, has become regarded as the oldest. Furthermore, [subsequent pilgrimages] such as the 33 places of Bandō, the 34 places of Chichibu and, possibly, the 88 places of Shikoku (henro) were established. Reaching places in every province and in each place, various pilgrimage courses have been originating.

NOTES

¹ Ian Reader represents one notable exception in the field. He has actively included pilgrim voices in both his research and his theoretical assertions.

² Like many aspects of Turner's theories, this point is open to debate. For instance, one could argue that each individual pilgrim journey, though incomplete, has all of the characteristics that Turner associates with a complete pilgrimage accomplished on a single journey. Also, since he admits that pilgrimage is not liminal in the full sense, one could argue about the degree of liminality present in a particular pilgrimage.

³ It is important to note that the term "anti-structure," as it is applied to liminality and communitas, does not imply structure-lessness or chaos. Ritual patterns and rites of passage may indeed have formal, prescribed procedures and may be directed by some type of leader.

⁴ Eiki Hoshino, a prominent scholar of the pilgrimage, believes that a foreign researcher has a considerable advantage. In short, he says that Japanese are much more likely to candidly speak to a foreigner. Personal questions might be considered less intrusive if asked by a foreign researcher.

⁵ At Ryūzo-ji in Yamaguchi prefecture, I was shown an old, dilapidated Kannon hall which contained a Kannon image of a pre-Meiji area pilgrim route. The route was

arranged around prefectural boundaries, so with the Meiji re-structuring, it lost its significance. Rev. Miyahara, who is in his seventies, said that in his lifetime only two or three pilgrims had sought inscriptions for this pilgrim route.

⁶ This was a very curious site that took place within a miniature pilgrimage located on a hill behind Yamaguchi prefecture's Kozanji temple, which is temple number 19 on the Chugoku Kannon pilgrimage. This particular middle aged man was the only "running pilgrim" I had personally observed (I have since talked with others). He was dressed in all white running attire and he broke his pace to stop in front of each of the 33 Kannon images. With each pause, he bowed deeply and offered verbal praise of Kannon.

⁷ Kōichi Osada(長田 攻一), professor of the Department of Road Studies, has overseen these research projects. He explained to me that they tended to give the questionnaires to those individuals who "looked like pilgrims."

⁸ The Shikoku data was collected in 1994 and the Chichibu data in 1997. Perhaps this time difference is significant.

⁹ With so many pilgrim temples, pilgrims are left to stand outside of the most sacred space. Sometimes a shadowy glimpse inside is all that is possible. I cannot prove it conclusively, but it seems that accessible temples, such as Mitaki-dera, enjoy a greater popularity.

¹⁰ This couple was initially reluctant to speak with me but became much more comfortable in the course of the conversation. They seemed to have no time constraints and the temple was nearly empty during the course of the conversation.

¹¹ Pilgrims frequently hang a bell from the white satchel that they often carry. In old times, this bell alerted would-be alms givers.

¹² A *nopperabou* is a demon without a face. Here the author is evoking the face-less, rather than demonic characteristics of this mythical creature.

¹³ Translated from Japanese by the author.

¹⁴ This unusual use of the western idiom "roller" (written in Kana, *roura*) suggests that the anonymous author is a young person.

¹⁵ Translated from Japanese by the author.

¹⁶ *Hijiri* were wandering priests of the people. Usually associated with Mt. Kōya, they were practitioners of Nembutsu.

¹⁷ Although women have partaken in pilgrim journeys from very early on, I cannot name any female pilgrim archetypes.

¹⁸ Perhaps like any rebellious icon, these idealized figures may provide an outlet for frustrations brought on by required conformity.

¹⁹ It is an extremely popular notion that Buddhist figures would travel to the mountains for ascetic practice. When on Mt. Daisen in Tottori prefecture, I was told that Zen Master Dogen practiced austerities in a particular valley. Dogen is not typically associated with such behavior, but people relish such tales.

²⁰ This was an unhurried conversation that took place in a train station that was otherwise deserted. The woman showed no hesitation in answering questions and had an air of confidence.

²¹ I have also heard this expression in reference to Kannon as well. Whether this is a case of pilgrim folklore carrying over from one tradition to another, I cannot be sure. A flyer for the Chugoku Kannon Reijo has the expression written above a cartoon image of a pilgrim with Kannon touching her shoulder.

²² It is not hard to conceive of a system of anti-structure with hierarchies. However, I do not believe that is what Turner is suggesting in his description of pilgrimage. In other places he speaks about how societal status is lost in *communitas*, but does not speak directly about this being replaced by a new system of hierarchy.

²³ Almsgivers often have experience as pilgrims as well.

²⁴ *Tōba* is the Japanese word for stupa. It is a five tiered symbol with each tier corresponding to earth, water, fire, wind and emptiness, respectively. They are commonly found in cemeteries and are made of both stone and wood.

²⁵ This was an excellent situation in which to carry on a conversation with a pilgrim. The man was confident, unhurried, and willing to answer a range of questions. The temple conversation took place at a distance from other visitors.

²⁶ This man showed great reluctance to speak with me. He seemed both hurried and nervous.

²⁷ Many say the pilgrim's staff is a symbolic representation of Kūkai.

²⁸ The temple was particularly crowded at the time of this conversation. The woman may have been especially reluctant to speak in the presence of others.

²⁹ Location stamp collocating is hardly a hobby confined to Buddhist pilgrimage in Japan. For instance, the U.S. National Park Service has developed a system whereby park visitors can obtain stamps at any national park.

³⁰ This woman was both unhurried and confident to speak with me. The presence of her friend throughout the conversation may have had some influence on her. The temple was otherwise empty.

³¹ Shinran's conceptions of merit transfer were somewhat different from the standard notions. Instead of transferring one's own merit to others, a person transmits Amida Buddha's merit to others.

³² This form of punishment was gradually abolished for safety reasons. The roads were becoming filled with "pilgrim thugs."

³³ I became rather good friends with Watanabe-san. She never displayed any reluctance to answer questions about her religious faith and was even quick to correct me if she thought my understanding was wrong.

³⁴ This is unusual for a man to become a priest when his father is not one.

³⁵ Translated from Japanese by the author.

³⁶ Translated from Japanese by the author.

³⁷ In some ways, this situation is comparable to those of religious converts. Converts, having perhaps considered the intricacies of a faith, often have stronger opinions about issues than people who are members of that faith "by default."

³⁸ The Garcias were very enthusiastic about answering my questions. Our conversations took place in private and were rather leisurely.

³⁹ Rev. Miyahara also expressed a slight fib when he told me that he "thought" the Chugoku Kannon Reijo began around the Meiji-era. As a chief executive of the pilgrimage association, he certainly would know that the route is just over twenty years old. It clearly states this on their website, www.kannon.org. Maybe he believed that I would not take it seriously, if I knew that it was so young.

⁴⁰ I never tire of asking this interesting question, "Is Kannon male, female, or without gender?" I asked this informally to a group of 12 Japanese students. The responses were roughly 50/50, male/female.

⁴¹ Some may question whether the pilgrims would have any understanding of the actual meaning of the Heart or Kannon Sutras. The texts are recited with phonetic pronunciations next to a text which is written entirely in Chinese characters. However, books which explain the meaning of these texts are plentiful and popular. One pilgrim showed me that he was reading a manga-illustrated explanation of the Kannon Sutra. He had carefully underlined what he believed to be the important parts.

⁴² This non-dual assertion can lead to the understanding that “I am Kannon” or “I am the Buddha.”

⁴³ These categories themselves tend to suggest conflation of the two primary meanings of pilgrimage. The first category clearly denotes travel, while the second and third category seem to suggest institutions.

⁴⁴ “Grace-only” religious systems seem psychologically “hard to swallow” for most people. If you go into any bar in America and ask the person occupying the nearest barstool, “Do you have to do anything to get into heaven?” I think a vast majority of people would answer a resounding, “Yes.”

⁴⁵ Technically, Shakyamuni Buddha’s “Middle way” discouraged such extremes of behavior as any type of asceticism. However, it was never fully abandoned by some of his followers and remains a central part of most forms of Buddhism. Specialists sometimes give elaborate justifications for this.

⁴⁶ Anyone with background in conversational Japanese will realize that the Japanese understanding of “shumi” does not directly correspond to the English sense of “hobby.” Shumi which are stated to be “music” or “movies” seem more like interests than hobbies.

⁴⁷ Translated from Japanese by the author.

⁴⁸ For ease of use, “Inoue-san” is a fictitious name given to an anonymous pilgrim.

⁴⁹ These discussions took place over several hours both with the other members of her party and separately from them. We were alone when I asked her questions about her motives and aims. She displayed no hesitation in answering any questions.

⁵⁰ Historically, the Chichibu route was popular due in part to the fact that there were no governmental checkpoints between Edo and Chichibu.

⁵¹ These could be less famous Kannon routes or any other type of non-88 place routes.

⁵² Translated from Japanese by the author.

⁵³ For ease of use, “Nakagawa-san” is a fictitious name given to an anonymous pilgrim.

⁵⁴ “Nakagawa-san” was unhurried and spoke with me confidently in a conversation separate from other temple visitors.

⁵⁵ Translated from Japanese by the author.

⁵⁶ For ease of use, “Nakashima-san” is a fictitious name given to an anonymous pilgrim.

⁵⁷ The discussion with “Nakashima-san” and her mother took place over a period of about one hour. The seemed enthusiastic to speak with me about anything regarding pilgrimage, except their family’s Buddhist sect. Although, both were present throughout the conversation, at one point “Nakashima-san” spoke so that her mother could not hear.

⁵⁸ Much has been written in recent years about the Mizuko-kūyo or, memorial for the water-child. During my many hours at Mitaki-dera in Hiroshima, I saw dozens of women, men, couples, and even entire families make offering to a specific Jizō image dedicated to the mizuko.

⁵⁹ Camping usually implies using a tent while bivouacking or its Japanese counterpart, nojuku-surukoto(野宿), implies sleeping roughshod on the ground, under a tree, or in a cave. Shugyō-daishi has his bivouac blanket clearly visible on his back.

⁶⁰ I first met Amy Chavez on a train in 2001. She has been very enthusiast about this research and we have maintained an ongoing dialogue.

⁶¹ This woman spoke confidently with me at a distance from her five traveling companions.

⁶² On several occasions, I have invited somewhat disinterested Japanese friends to visit pilgrim locations only to have them become almost immediately “hooked.”

⁶³ This couple answered my questions at a leisurely pace and with little hesitation. They spoke in the company of their four traveling companions.

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